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BODIES IN CONTACT

European Representations of
Aboriginal Men
1770-1803

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the late eighteenth-century history of European and Aboriginal male bodies in contact. It covers the period from 1770 to 1803, and charts French and British maritime explorers' representations of the Aboriginal male body. In particular it examines their descriptions of both the body's various parts, such as skin, hair, the face, and tongue, and how it was used in the pursuit of war, subsistence, pleasure and courtship. The thesis contextualises the explorers' descriptions of different aspects of the Aboriginal male body within the contemporary European intellectual, cultural, and political milieus, in order to shed light on the particularities of eighteenth-century thought. More specifically, this thesis will examine what these representations reveal about the period's diverse ideas about human difference, the state of nature, so-called savage societies, corporeality, the nature of civilisation, hygiene, sexuality, language, and peace and conflict.

This thesis is not only about European observations of Aboriginal men, but also a study of first contact in Australia. It is an intervention in the existing culture-contact historiography and exploration hagiography because it subjects the explorers' accounts of Aboriginal contact to a much closer reading, examining aspects of the encounters which have often been elided, perhaps because they were considered too mundane, prurient, or fantastic. In this regard the thesis builds on the scholarship of literary scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt, who recognise that the European contact narratives can not be read uncritically as ethnographic sources, and instead advocate that they be examined for what they reveal about European representational practices.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to draw out the complexities and nuances of eighteenth-century contact narratives, and consider the agency of the Aboriginal subjects, not by speculating on their perspectives, but by contextualising the European representations, and bringing to light lesser known accounts in which they controlled the nature of the encounters, were depicted in a more positive light, and subjected the Europeans to similar scrutiny, and at times, with equal disdain.

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Declaration

This is to certify that:

- the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Ph.D,
- I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution,
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of references.

Signed: *Shimo Koishi*

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This thesis concerns Aboriginal history so I should begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land in which I live, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and also the people from which I am descended, the Leregon people of the Yawaru nation.

This thesis was partly motivated by family stories which made me question stereotypes about Aboriginal men and wonder where these ideas originated. More particularly, it was driven by interests which were fostered during my undergraduate studies. I first encountered histories of masculinity and the body in a fascinating honours seminar taught by my supervisor, Stephen Garton. I am especially grateful to Stephen for his patience with my progress, and for helping me to develop my writing voice. I would also like to acknowledge my initial supervisor, Jan Kociumbas, who introduced me to the history of exploration, and the writings of François Péron which intrigued me from the very beginning.

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Finally, I must thank my mother Glenys Holley for being an inspiring woman and for forgiving me for missing so many family visits during the writing of this thesis.

BODIES IN CONTACT

i. bodies in contact

When I first began this thesis, I believed that first contacts between European explorers and Aboriginal people were momentous encounters, unutterably changing the lives of those involved. My initial intention was to expound on the political ramifications of first contact, and suggest how these encounters could illuminate complex discourses on race relations, imperialism, and colonisation. I planned to explain how these encounters offered insights into the trajectory of the history that followed. Perhaps, in my desire to construct a vivid history, I was mindful of some contact narratives which relate dramatic scenes of mayhem and bloodshed, or alternatively, other historiographical discourses which depict the diplomacy of two cultures coming together, exchanging tokens of amity and recognising their common humanity.¹ Over the course of my research, however, my ambitions changed.

¹ For examples of this kind of narrative which suggests that first contacts were momentous see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Richard Howard (trans.), Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1984, and Anne Salmond, *Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2003. Examples of histories which depict Aboriginal people as passive victims are Ernest Favenc, *The History of Australian Exploration from 1788-1888*, Turner and Henderson, Sydney, 1888, and Alan Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact: An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific 1767-1840*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1966. For contact histories which focus on indigenous protocols of encountering strangers see D.J. Mulvaney, *Encounters in Place: Outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606-1984*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1989, and Maria Nugent, *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005. Finally, Inga Clendinnen constructs a narrative of the British and Aboriginal people's relatively amicable engagement in Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003.

What crystallised the thinking behind this thesis was a particular incident concerning James Cook. Cook has been both idealised and vilified for his impact on antipodean history, be it through his incredible navigational discoveries, or as a rapacious harbinger of colonisation.² But I had a different Cook in mind. Upon his very first opportunity to make landfall in Australia and meet the Aboriginal people of Botany Bay, hitherto unseen by European eyes, he decided to defer this epochal moment in Australian history, preferring to have a spot of lunch first. Perhaps, his nonchalance merely emulated the indifference that the Aboriginal people had displayed at the strangers' arrival in the bay, for they had 'scarce[ly] lifted their eyes from their employment' when the *Endeavour* sailed past.³ I cannot believe that after this seemingly mundane beginning either the explorers or the indigenes thought that, their lives would never be the same after their encounter.

In fact, many of the Europeans' exchanges with Aboriginal people could be construed as somewhat mundane, concerning practical matters such as the search for water, or else eliciting trivial information, for example the Oyster Bay word for fart.⁴ This is not to say that there were no dramatic encounters between explorers and Aboriginal people, for there were certainly meetings which led to tragic deaths, or provided new insights into the nature of indigenous life, and even contributed to European theories about mankind and civilisation in general. And there were undoubtedly occasional moments of mutual understanding and comprehension between the two groups, as well as wonder, awe, confusion, and derision. Yet, the vast majority of the explorers' accounts of Aboriginal people concern simple facts about how Aboriginal people lived, what they ate, where they slept, and even how they relieved themselves.

² Nicholas Thomas succinctly and evocatively traces both interpretations of Cook in Nicholas Thomas. *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook*, Penguin Books, London. 2004 [2003], xxxi-iii.

³ Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey*, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 22-3.

⁴ François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 218. This will be discussed in chapter four.

These descriptions of ordinary activities conducted during first encounters tend to be left out of contact histories, in favour of instances which more obviously shed light on broader political concerns, such as land tenure, diplomatic protocols and rituals, and gender relations.⁵ But such accounts are also pregnant with implication, so deserve close examination. These accounts of the mundane challenge teleological histories, because they illustrate that first encounters were not between imperial invaders and indigenous victims, both with preordained roles to enact the colonial process. Instead, these meetings were simply between men, for women were usually left at home, be that a house in Europe or a shelter amongst the trees. Moreover, they were meetings between men with more immediate concerns than empire, such as the need for nourishment, anxiety over safeguarding themselves from harm, or competing feelings of fear, bewilderment, curiosity, and surprise. Neither the European nor Aboriginal men consistently held the upper-hand in these exchanges, or controlled the situations, as both were ultimately held hostage to the needs of their bodies. At the same time, it was these mutually recognised frailties and pleasures of the body, which enabled the European and Aboriginal men brief moments of connection: miming acts of bodily elimination, laughing at the other's lack of strength, stamina, or agility, and touching, scrutinizing, and adorning each other's bodies.

Hence, first contacts should be read as corporeal encounters, as the body was a crucial part of these first exchanges between foreign peoples. Indeed the term contact means 'to touch', and it was through their own bodies that the Europeans engaged with indigenous people. It was through their perceptions of the indigenous body that they apprehended and comprehended the Aboriginal people and culture. Further, the explorers were also products of their time, and in the eighteenth century Europeans were obsessed with the body.⁶ New

⁵ See for example Alan Frost, 'New South Wales as terra nullius: The British denial of Aboriginal land rights', in Susan Janson and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Through White Eyes*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, 65-76, Mulvaney, *Encounters in Place*, and Ann McGrath, 'The White Man's Looking Glass: Aboriginal-Colonial Gender Relations at Port Jackson', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 99, Oct. 1990, 189-206.

⁶ For general histories on the body in the eighteenth century see Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, Penguin Books, London, 2004, Daniel Cottom, *Cannibals and Philosophers: Bodies of Enlightenment*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 2001, and Veronica

empirical sciences enabled closer, and seemingly more sophisticated scrutiny of it, and taxonomies created ostensibly objective ways of cataloguing and ordering bodies.⁷ Further, new institutions and media were developing to regulate and disseminate how its appetites should be controlled and disciplined.⁸ Finally, high and low cultures alike explored and relished both the dignities and indignities of the human body.⁹

This thesis is about bodies. On one level, the thesis covers the period from 1770 to 1803, and charts the European maritime explorers' representations of the Aboriginal male body, that is, their descriptions of both the body's various parts and how it was used in the pursuit of war, subsistence, and pleasure. Yet, the thesis is also an intellectual history, interpreting these various descriptions of different aspects of the Aboriginal male body as case studies in order to examine the particularities of eighteenth-century thought. For example the period's diverse philosophies on the state of nature, and savage life in particular, corporeality, human difference, the nature of civilisation and stadial theory, hygiene, sexuality, language, peace and conflict, and so on.

Finally, whilst benefiting from the extensive and diverse scholarship on first contact in general, and the exploration of Australia in particular, I also critique this extant research. Many studies smooth out and flatten the complexities of these first cross-cultural encounters, in order to construct more straight-forward hagiographies about the achievements of the European explorers, or else anthropological conjectures on the nature of pre-colonial Aboriginal life. These narratives tend to be concerned with investigating either

Kelly and Dorothea Von Mücke (eds), *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994.

⁷ For discussions of the empirical scrutiny and categorisation of the body see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 1993 [1991]. Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1993. and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge (MA), 1997.

⁸ See Carol Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth-Century France*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2002, Vernon A. Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, and Vernon A. Rosario 'Forbidden Pleasures: Enlightenment Literature on Sexual Advice', in Paula Bennett and Vernon Rosario (eds.), *Solitary Pleasures: The Historical, Literary, and Artistic Discourses on Autoeroticism*, Routledge, New York, 1995, 75-100.

⁹ For example Simon Dickie, 'Hilarity and Pitilessness in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2003, 1-22.

the explorers or the indigenes, so neither allows a detailed, nuanced, exploration of first contact as the interplay between Europeans and Aboriginal people. So this thesis is also about contact. It is not concerned solely with European observations of Aboriginal men, but also how the explorers interpreted the various ways they touched and engaged with the Aboriginal men, and how they responded to Aboriginal men's scrutiny of, and physical intercourse with them. In short, then, this thesis explores the late eighteenth-century history of European and Aboriginal male bodies in contact.

ii. histories of contact

The history of European contacts in Australia began in the early seventeenth century with the landing of the *Duyfken* at Cape York in 1606. The Dutch pinnace was captained by Willem Jansz, and was commissioned by the Dutch East India Company, or VOC, to investigate the 'rumours of trade opportunities and gold lying to the southeast of the Spice Islands'.¹⁰ Our knowledge of this encounter is only fragmentary, as Jansz's journals have long been lost, so it can only be pieced together from the official documents of the VOC administration; the place names and arcs of coastlines on the nascent maps of *terra australis incognita*; instructions for, and accounts by, the navigators of subsequent expeditions; and the personal records of observers who noted the ship's departure from Bantam in late 1605.¹¹ All we know of this very first encounter is that the *Duyfken* sailed into what the Dutch called Fly Bay, and the captain sent a boat to explore an unnamed waterway, which became known as Batavia River. Here the sailors were attacked by a volley of spears and one of their men was killed. The only record of these Aboriginal people was that they were 'wild, cruel, black and barbarous men who killed some of [the VOCs] sailors'.¹²

¹⁰ William Eisler, *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, 69.

¹¹ These documents and maps are reproduced in Günter Schilder, *Australia Unveiled: The share of the Dutch navigators in the discovery of Australia*, trans. by Olaf Richter, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd., Amsterdam, 1976.

¹² This description was in the instructions issued to Abel Tasman in 1644, for his second voyage to Australia. ARAKA 771, *Batavias Brieff Boek lopende van 15 Januarji tot 29 November Anno 1644* No. 2, fol. 39, cited in Schilder, *Australia Unveiled*, 50.

Subsequent European landings would contribute little more to the European picture of Aboriginal people. This is partly due to the fact that for the next hundred and sixty years or so, European landings were due to either folly or efficient mercantilism, so the documentary evidence of their encounters with Aboriginal people is scant.¹³ The only exception to this was the landing of English buccaneer William Dampier off the north-west coast in 1688 and further south at Shark Bay in 1699. He briefly encountered the local Aboriginal people, but found that they offered nothing desirable for the European trader, and his attempts to extract 'some service from them' in the form of carrying water barrels was a dismal failure. His evaluation that they were 'the miserablist People in the World', along with his blunt descriptions of their bodies and material culture, were well remembered by later explorers who sought to either prove or refute his accounts.¹⁴

It was not until the eighteenth-century that the European interactions with, and descriptions of, indigenous peoples became more fully developed and heterogeneous, as this was when 'advancements in knowledge' were incorporated into the goals of the voyages of discovery. From this time the expeditions' crews included naturalists, botanists, zoologists, proto-anthropologists, artists, and men familiar with different philosophical approaches to the study of man. These voyages of discovery also had wealthy patrons such as the state, the admiralty, or scientific societies, so they could

¹³ Many European merchants and explorers paid brief visits to the northern and western coasts of the continent, and the southern coast of Tasmania. The Dutch are best represented by Carstensz in 1623, and Tasman in 1642; the Spanish by de Quiros in 1606; and the English by the buccaneer William Dampier in 1688 and 1699. Dampier's journals were published in the contemporary period, so little was known about these other voyages by competing maritime powers. The details of de Quiros's voyage were not known of by the English until 1762 and Tasman's until 1694. See Eisler, *The Furthest Shore*, and John Kenny, *Before the First Fleet: Europeans in Australia 1606-1777*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst NSW, 1995, 41.

¹⁴ His accounts were similar to Jansz's in essence, for he shared the Dutchman's imperatives and was just as disappointed by the lack of commercial potential. His accounts will be examined in other chapters as they were very influential for the eighteenth-century explorers who often compared the Aboriginal people they saw with his description of the New Hollanders. William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World: The Journal of a Buccaneer*, Mark Becken (ed.), Hummingbird Press, London, 1998 [1697], 221 and 218, and William Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland, &c., in the year 1699*, James Knapston, London, 1703.

afford to conduct more leisurely explorations, and indulge interests which would not necessarily return great financial reward.¹⁵

Between 1770 and 1803 more than twenty European expeditions landed in Australia, but only a handful have had an enduring legacy on the history of culture contact. In 1770 James Cook charted the then unknown east coast of the continent, meeting Aboriginal people at Botany Bay and Endeavour River. His companion ship, the *Adventure*, visited Tasmania during Cook's second voyage of discovery, and he himself landed there on his third.¹⁶ Despite these later expeditions, it is his first voyage on the *Endeavour* which is considered to have inaugurated Australian history. His accounts of the land and people eventually gave rise to the First Fleet which established the first British colony at Port Jackson in 1788. Despite creating a settlement, the First Fleet can be seen as explorers, because the expedition's administration and marines were largely

¹⁵ The eighteenth-century voyages of discovery were also backed by the state, and not trading companies, so were more formally organised. O.H.K Spate, *The Pacific since Magellan: Volume 3: Paradise Found and Lost*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1988, 55.

¹⁶ The scholarly interest in Cook's three voyages is extensive, stemming from its inclusion in John Hawkesworth's compendium of four late eighteenth-century expeditions to the South Seas. John Hawkesworth, *An Account of The Voyages Undertaken By The Order of His Present Majesty For Making Discoveries in The Southern Hemisphere, and Successively Performed By Commodore Byron, Captain Carteret, Captain Wallis, and Captain Cook, in the Dolphin, the Swallow, And the Endeavour*, 3 Vols., W. Strahan and T. Caddell, London, 1773. Most recent studies, however, are indebted to the painstakingly fine editing of John Cawte Beaglehole, who edited the journals from Cook's three voyages in his magnum opus. James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 vols, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1955-1967. Beaglehole also edited Joseph Banks' journals, of which the Australian section was further annotated by Paul Brunton. See Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771*, 2 vols, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Angus and Robertson with the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1962, and Banks, *Australian Journey*. The work of Bernard Smith brought the numerous art works from Cook's voyages to light, and influenced later scholars' ideas about eighteenth-century representations of indigenous peoples. See Bernard Smith, *European Visions and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, and New York, 1960, and Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 1992, and Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Melbourne, 1987. Numerous works have examined Cook's voyages, though many are primarily hagiographies which pay little regard to the representations of Aboriginal people. A key turning point in the scholarship came with Gananath Obeyesekere, who took issue with Marshall Sahlins' interpretation of indigenous responses, and will be discussed later. However, Obeyesekere is also significant because he highlights the violence of these first encounters. Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*, 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997 [1992]. Finally, recent works have provided more nuanced readings of Cook's voyages, using anthropological evidence to present indigenous perspectives in these encounters. See Salmond, *Trial of the Cannibal*, Thomas, *Discoveries*, and Glyndwr Williams (ed.), *Captain Cook: Explorations and Reassessments*, Boydell Press, Rochester, 2004.

given four-year commissions, so most returned home again in 1792. Further, during their stay they explored an extensive area in New South Wales, including Broken Bay towards the north, and the Blue Mountains in the west. They recorded their discoveries and opinions in journals, many of which were published at the time, so shaped the idea of Aboriginal people in the British popular imaginary.¹⁷ Fellow Englishman Matthew Flinders circumnavigated the continent in the *Investigator* from 1801 to 1803, meeting Aboriginal people at numerous points throughout his voyage, and is remembered for suggesting the nation's eventual name.¹⁸

¹⁷ Although the First Fleet was led by Arthur Phillip, the eventual governor of the new colony, the official journal was to be written by the marine captain John Hunter. John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792*, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball. John Bach (ed.). Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793]. However, due to the contemporary popularity of traveler's journals numerous officers had publishing deals such as John White and Watkin Tench. John White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962 [1790], and Watkin Tench, *1788: Comprising 'A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay' and 'A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson'*, Tim Flannery (ed.). The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793]. As with Cook's voyages, most of the extensive scholarship has excluded the First Fleet's contact with Aboriginal people, or else examined it in relatively cursory detail. See for example, John Moore, *The First Fleet Marines 1786-1792*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987, Alan Frost, *Arthur Phillip, 1738-1814: His Voyaging*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1987, and Alan Frost, *Botany Bay Mirages: Illusions of Australia's Convict Beginnings*, Melbourne University Press, Carleton, 1994. The various portraits of Aboriginal people have been reproduced and examined, however. Peter Emmett (ed.), *Fleeting Encounters: Pictures and Chronicles of the First Fleet*, Museum of Sydney, Sydney, 1995, and Bernard Smith and Alwyne Wheeler, *The Art of the First Fleet and Other Early Australian Drawings*, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the British Museum, Melbourne, 1988. An important development in the historiography was Ann McGrath's examination of the First Fleet men's encounters with Aboriginal women, which critiqued the officers' sense of chivalry, and their representations of both the indigenous women and men. McGrath, 'White Man's Looking Glass'. Finally, the most significant study is Inga Clendinnen's, which reinterprets the British and Aboriginal encounters through a close reading of the First Fleet journals, and seeks to draw out the complexities of the interactions between these people, with a particular focus on the development of amity. This work not only rewrites the Aboriginal protagonists back into this well-trod history, but attempts to capture and project their individual characters and drives, a dramatic departure from earlier histories which homogenised Aboriginal people. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*. This work will be discussed in detail later.

¹⁸ The scholarship on Flinders has mainly been biographical and emphasises his navigational and cartographic achievements, or else his personal relationships with his long-suffering wife, Ann Chappelle, who devotedly waited for him during his many years away, and his cat Trim. See for example, Ernest Scott, *The Life of Matthew Flinders, R.N.*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1914, Miriam Estensen, *The Life of Matthew Flinders*, Allen and Unwin, Crow's Nest, 2002, Catharine Retter, *Letters to Ann: the Love Letters of Matthew Flinders and Ann Chappelle*, Angus and Robertson, Pymble, 2001, and Annette Macarthur-Onslow, *A biographical tribute to the memory of Trim*, Angus and Robertson, Pymble, 1997. While Scott does mention Flinders' encounters with Aboriginal people his analysis was limited, for example all he said of the King Georges Sound men was that they were 'friendly, ... shy and suspicious'.

The French also sent their ships to chart this still largely unknown land. Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne's *Mascarin* and *Marquis de Castries* landed in Tasmania in 1772, and though their encounter with the indigenous people was brief and violent, it was the first recorded European contact with Tasmanians. Antoine Bruny d'Entrecasteaux led the *Recherche* and the *Espérance* to southern waters in order to look for Jean-François de Galaup de La Pérouse who had gone missing shortly after his departure from Botany Bay in 1788. D'Entrecasteaux visited Tasmania in 1792 and again in 1793, and his crew's depiction of indigenous people challenged the majority of European accounts by representing them in a different light.¹⁹ Finally, Nicolas Baudin's *Géographe* and *Naturaliste* sailed around the continent from 1801 to 1803, and was to date the most sophisticated scientific expedition, amassing a vast array of floral and faunal specimens. The naturalists were also versed in the latest ethnographic philosophies and methodologies, so recorded detailed descriptions of the Aboriginal people, and produced a fine collection of illustrations depicting individuals and scenes of indigenous life.²⁰ It is these particular explorers'

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in Flinders' encounter with the Baudin expedition in 1802, which explore Flinders' contact with Aboriginal people in more detail. Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, and John West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Matthew Flinders*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2004 and Anthony J. Brown, *Ill-Starred Captains: Flinders and Baudin*, rev'd ed., Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2004.

¹⁹ The brief nature of these expeditions' stays in Tasmania, and the fact that many of the journals have only recently been translated into English, has meant that they have thus far received comparatively little attention in Australia except by French Studies scholars. One of the few scholars to explore these French expeditions' encounters with Aboriginal people is Colin Dyer, who has meticulously reproduced many of the journals' descriptions of Aboriginal people and society, but mostly refrained from interpreting or analysing them. See Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians, 1772-1839*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2005. A valuable source on Marion-Dufresne's expedition is Edward Duyker's translation of the various accounts of the expedition's stay in Tasmania and his biography. Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, and Edward Duyker, *An Officer of the Blue: Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne, South Sea Explorer, 1724-1772*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994. The journal of Jacques de Labillardière, botanist on d'Entrecasteaux's expedition was translated into English in 1800, but, except for a few valuable translations, has been also largely ignored by Australian scholars. Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, and Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia and the Pacific, 1791-1793*, Edward Duyker and Maryse Duyker (trans. and eds.), Melbourne University Press, Carleton South, 2001, and Frank Horner, *Looking for La Perouse: D'Entrecasteaux in Australia and the South Pacific, 1792-1793*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton South, 1995.

²⁰ As with the aforementioned French expeditions, this voyage has received less academic attention in Australia than the British expeditions, though its recent bicentenary has catalysed

encounters with Aboriginal men, throughout the continent and Tasmania, which will be examined in this thesis.

iii. contact histories

These voyages have long been subject to scholarly study, so charting the historiography of first encounters in Australia is a difficult undertaking. The field includes texts for both popular and academic audiences, and represents scholars from history and anthropology, and occasionally geography and literary studies. It also incorporates the agenda of imperialists, espousers of agency, and post-colonialists, and adopts both western and indigenous perspectives. Consequently, this broad field has amassed a plethora of interpreters all essentially examining the same texts but to different ends. Entering this crowded arena and contributing to the immense corpus of this scholarship is a daunting task.

Negotiating the historiography is also difficult because it needs to be contextualised within the broader international scholarship. Although many studies focus exclusively on contact in Australia, or construct discovery and exploration as the foundation of the nation's history, such a designation is somewhat restrictive. It is less limiting to consider it as transnational history, for

some important works. Volume One of the official journal was published in 1807, and translated into English in 1809, illustrating the contemporary popularity of travellers' journals. François Péron and Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage de découverte aux terre Australes, exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste, et la goelette le Casuarina, pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*. 4 Vols. Imprimerie royale, Paris, 1807-16, and Péron, *Voyage*. However, the remaining volumes, and other journals would not be translated until much later. François Péron, and Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage of the Discovery to the Southern Lands: Book IV, Comprising Chapters XXII to XXXIV*, 2nd Ed., 1824, Christine Cornell (trans.), The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, and Nicolas Baudin, *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*, Christine Cornell (trans.), Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974. Key texts in the scholarship on the Baudin expedition's encounters with Aboriginal people include N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines. 1802*, Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1983, Jacqueline Bonnemains, Elliott Forsyth, and Bernard Smith (eds), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804*, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Melbourne, 1988, Margaret Sankey, 'Perceptions of the Aborigines Recorded during the Baudin Expedition: the Dynamics of First Encounter', in Bruce Bennett (ed.), *Australia in Between Cultures, Specialists Session papers from the 1998 Australian Academy of the Humanities Symposium*, Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra, 1999, 55-76, select essays in Margaret Sankey, Peter Cowley, and Jean Fornasiero (eds), *The Baudin Expedition 1800-1804: Texts, Contexts, and Subtexts*, special edition of *Australian Journal of French Studies*, Vol. XLI, No. 2, 2004, and Dyer, *French Explorers*.

the explorers themselves came from different European locations, and had travelled to a host of countries encountering a variety of other non-European peoples, which in turn influenced their perceptions and representations of Aboriginal men. Further, the scholarship has been influenced by studies of first contact in other locales such as the Americas and the Pacific. Thus, instead of considering the history of contact in Australia in isolation, it is crucial to draw on these works as well.

The first histories to describe European and Aboriginal encounters were conducted by nineteenth-century encyclopaedists of European exploration, for example, Ernest Favenc's *The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888* (1888), which essentially constructed this history as an encounter between the explorer and environment, and almost eclipsed Aboriginal people altogether.²¹ Later studies attempted to rewrite indigenous peoples into this history of exploration but still has an imperialist agenda, charting a narrative of western progress. Alan Moorehead's immensely popular *The Fatal Impact: An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific 1767-1840* (1966) for example, represents a teleological history of contact, constructing the decimation of indigenous people, culture, and environment as inevitable.²² It typifies indigenous history as one of victimhood, suggesting that European contact psychologically and materially destroyed indigenous societies through the introduction of new technologies, mores, vices, and contagions.²³ Subsequent histories on first encounters critiqued this narrative by addressing indigenous agency and employing archaeological and anthropological evidence.

Though it only makes minor references to Australia, K.R. Howe's *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Sea Islands History from First Settlement to Colonial Rule* (1984) illustrates an important turn in the historiography, for it challenges the assumption that 'Europeans were culturally and technologically

²¹ This text consists mainly of descriptive exposition which link long quotes from the primary sources. This volume is divided into two parts: the first tracing the land explorations from 1803 to 1888; and the second, the maritime expeditions from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Favenc, *History of Australian Exploration*.

²² Moorehead, *Fatal Impact*.

²³ For an overview of the 'fatal impact thesis' and its critics see Ian Campbell's excellent historiographical essay on Pacific contact. I.C. Campbell, 'The Culture of Culture Contact: Refractions from Polynesia', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2003, 66-8.

superior, the Islanders implicitly or explicitly inferior, passive, and unable to cope with the white man's all-powerful way of life'.²⁴ He situates European contact within the context of indigenous histories which stretch back tens of thousands of years, and argues that Pacific Islanders were essentially rational, and approached their encounters with Europeans in a strategic manner.²⁵ D.J. Mulvaney adopts a similar approach in his *Encounters in Place: Outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606-1985* (1989).²⁶ He uses twentieth-century anthropological evidence on Aboriginal codes of behaviour and archaeological evidence, in order to attempt to illustrate the indigenous perspectives on first contact. Mulvaney also seeks to demystify the Europeans' accounts of indigenous culture by interpreting them in a pragmatic fashion, for example, suggesting that the reason Tasmanians were not seen by the crew of the *Adventure* was indigenous 'prudence'.²⁷

Such pragmatic interpretations also imbue the hagiographies of the explorers as well, for they are largely intended to chart the journeys and discoveries of the individual expeditions. This is particularly apparent in the historiography concerning French expeditions, which have challenged the eminence of British voyagers in the history of Australian exploration by translating the French accounts, and bringing to light valuable extracts from the journals. Examples of these include Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 and 1772* (1992), Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier, *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793* (1993), and Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians, 1772-1839* (2005).²⁸ However, in their descriptions of the expeditions, these studies, in tandem with the biographical works by authors such as Alan Frost, Edward

²⁴ K.R. Howe. *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Sea Islands History from First Settlement to Colonial Rule*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1984. 350.

²⁵ For example, he suggests that the Tahitians realised they could not martially compete with Samuel Wallis, but they 'still tried to gain some initiatives', which took the form of a 'flourishing trade in prostitution'. Howe. *Where the Waves Fall*. 87-8.

²⁶ Mulvaney, *Encounters in Place*.

²⁷ Mulvaney, *Encounters in Place*, 33.

Duyker, and Anthony Brown, tend to read the journals in an uncritical fashion.²⁹ They take for granted the assumption that the explorers were rational and modern, and that their accounts of Aboriginal people were essentially factual, though perhaps a little biased.

Besides being anachronistic, the problem with ascribing a contemporary rationality to either the eighteenth-century Aborigines or Europeans is that it curtails the interpretative possibilities of the accounts, resulting in brief matter-of-fact discussions of the encounters. These works tend to gloss over the explorers' contact with Aboriginal people in a reductive fashion, by assuming that the explorers were only concerned with a quest for land or knowledge, and the Aborigines were wary of the Europeans' presence, and perhaps even cognisant of their aims. As stated earlier, the primary concern of such studies is to chart the achievements of the expeditions, so they often elide or smooth over the journals' eighteenth-century eccentricities, such as their entertainment of the idea of the fantastic, or the explorers' seemingly prurient interests in the body. Such decontextualisation is particularly apparent in Inga Clendinnen's *Dancing with Strangers* (2003).³⁰

Clendinnen is one of the few historians to offer an ambitious and conjectural reading of the explorer journals, so her arguments will be discussed in particular detail throughout the chapters of this thesis. She reconstructs the relations between Aboriginal people and the British colonists of the new Port Jackson settlement by closely reading the First Fleet journals, and seeks to draw out the complexities of the interactions between these people, with a particular focus on the development of amity. *Dancing with Strangers* has received popular acclaim because of its dedication to characterisation, as many of Clendinnen's chapters focus on individual officers and Aboriginal men. However, in her studies of the latter she is faced with a similar problem identified by Greg Denning, that in her excavation of the Aboriginal protagonists

²⁸ Duyker (ed.), *Discovery of Tasmania*, Plomley and Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General*, and Dyer, *French Explorers*.

²⁹ Alan Frost, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton Vic., 1995, Edward Duyker, *François Péron: An Impetuous Life: Naturalist and Voyager*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton Vic., 2006, and Brown, *Ill-Starred Captains*.

she has to use 'outsider' sources to portray the drives of the 'insider'.³¹ She acknowledges this difficulty, but does not genuinely take heed of it, and rarely approaches the British representations of the Aboriginal men with sufficient scepticism or critique. Further, her examination of the self-representations of the British outsider is poorly developed.

Clendinnen accepts *prima-facie* the British perceptions of Aboriginal people and does not explain the contexts of their encounters. For example, in her discussion of Bennelong's seemingly volatile temperament, she does not consider whether his behaviour transgressed what the eighteenth-century Britons considered normative behaviour for themselves or for the *savage*.³² Further, Clendinnen's affection for her First Fleet officers is palpable, but she does not always recognise that they too were very different animals to the contemporary reader, and that their perceptions were partly determined by their contemporary ethnocentrism, imperial agenda, and *amour propre*, so in need of much contextualisation. While it is a fascinating read, its exclusive focus on the First Fleet, and biographical emphasis means that *Dancing with Strangers* has not engaged with the broader historiography or even the wider contexts of the British and Aboriginal encounter. Moreover, its focus on the particular reveals little about the general, so it fails to elucidate the 'universal aspects' of culture contact.

In his historiographical essay on Pacific culture contact, Ian Campbell suggests that the desire to explain the universal aspects of culture contact rather than just describing the unique features of a particular encounter, was one of the motives of postmodernists such as Denning.³³ Denning prefers to identify as a neomodernist, and suggests that his approach to 'knowledge-making' is to be aware of the 'possibilities and limits of knowing', to realise 'what is known and

³⁰ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*.

³¹ In his explanation of why he turned to anthropological methodologies and sources in his work, historian Greg Denning states 'I wanted to know the Marquesans as much as I could as they were before they were influenced and changed by European ways. ... I discovered that there were customs and institutions among the Marquesans which I could not understand or indeed uncover in the outsider's views of them that were my sources. I turned to anthropology'. Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1888*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980, 4.

³² Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 107.

how brokenly it is known'. and to 'begin with the real and enlarge it with imagination'.³⁴ He considers 'islands' as the ideal subject for his neomodernism, because while they are small and isolated, thereby 'manageable', they are where 'humankind themes' are played out. Beaches are the theatre for observing such themes, as they are the sites where encounters between 'those who come first and those who come after' occurred. Finally, Denning contends that the 'past belongs to all those on whom it impinges', which includes us today.³⁵ So, for Denning, contact history is not just about the particular individuals who encountered one another, but can be interpreted for universal themes which shed light on other cultures and other times.

Other influential studies which have explored these universal aspects of culture contact have not come from historians but instead from anthropologists, philosophers, and literary scholars. The most significant scholar in this field is the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, whose work sparked one of the most controversial debates in the field. Campbell contends that Sahlins' interest in contact history stems from his curiosity concerning what happens when 'two structures normally occupying different worlds come into contact'.³⁶ Sahlins juxtaposes the British depictions of sexual encounters in Hawaii with an

³³ Campbell, 'Culture of Culture Contact', 69.

³⁴ Denning argues that 'modernity in principles of knowledge-advancement can never be gone, be "post-";' so prefers to identify as a neomodernist rather than a postmodernist. Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across times, culture and self*. Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2004, 12-3.

³⁵ He goes on to say that we 'are bound together by the encounters of Native and Strangers in our past. There is no 'other side of the beach', no 'this side of the beach' in a history of this all-impinging past. Such a history needs to be inclusive. Each side can only tell its own history by also telling the other's. That is its politics'. Denning, *Beach Crossings*, 13. Such an assertion is controversial because since the 1990s there have been debates about insiders and outsiders, and who has the right to speak for the past and for indigenous people. For an overview of this debate see Geoffrey M White and Ty Kawika Tengan, 'Disappearing Worlds: Anthropology and Cultural Studies in Hawai'i and the Pacific', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2001, 381-416. For proponents of the view that indigenous insiders must speak for themselves, see Haunani-Kay Trask, 'Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol.3, 1991, 159-67, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, London and New York, 1999. In Australia this issue was most contentious within feminism, and the best known debate was between Diane Bell and Jackie Huggins. See Diane Bell 'Speaking About Rape is Everyone's Business', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1989, 403-416. J. Huggins, J. Wilmott, I. Tarago, K. Willets, L. Bond, L. Holt, E. Bourke, M. Bin Salik, P. Fowell, J. Schmider, V. Craigie, and L. McBride-Levi, 'Letter to the editor', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 5, 1991, 506-513, and for a discussion see Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000.

³⁶ Campbell, 'Culture of Culture Contact', 73.

anthropological study of Hawaiian sexual practices and discourses in his 'Supplement to the Voyage of Cook; or, *le calcul sauvage*' (1981). His aim is to compare the structural relations of both cultures, and, more importantly, reveal how historic events impacted on the enduring structural characteristics of the two societies.³⁷ This approach situates contact within the context of both societies, and gives a less tokenistic indigenous perspective than some of the aforementioned studies. However, it is his scholarship on the death of Cook which has attracted controversy.

In 'Captain James Cook; or The Dying God' (1982) Sahlins examines the historical events which led to Cook being described as the god Lono by the Hawaiians and later European writers.³⁸ He contends that the Hawaiians understood the strangers' arrival within the praxis of their own myths and beliefs, and since Cook's return to Kealakekua Bay coincided with the *makahiki*, which celebrated Lono's annual arrival, and bore other resemblances to this myth, Cook was perceived as the embodiment of the deity, and as such ritually sacrificed at the end of the festival. Sahlins' interest here was to illuminate the 'structure of the conjuncture', or understand the 'set of historical relationships that at once reproduce the traditional cultural categories and gives them new values out of the pragmatic context'.³⁹

However, he was criticised by the Sri Lankan anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere who, as a fellow 'native', sympathised with the Hawaiians. In *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (1992) he accused Sahlins of reproducing European myths which held that naïve natives always believed white men to be gods, and as such, argued that indigenous people were denied a rational sensibility.⁴⁰ He also points out that such accounts mask the fact that Cook had a hand in his own death because of his increasingly violent and avaricious treatment of the indigenous people. Although not all of

³⁷ Marshall Sahlins, 'Supplement to the Voyage of Cook; or, *le calcul sauvage*', in *Islands of History*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1985, 1-31. This essay was originally given as the Marc Bloch Lecture, L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, June, 1981.

³⁸ Sahlins, 'Captain James Cook; or The Dying God', in *Islands of History*, 104-35. This essay was originally given as the Sir James G. Frazer Lecture, Liverpool University, May 1982.

³⁹ Sahlins, 'Captain James Cook', 125.

⁴⁰ Obeyesekere, *Apotheosis of Captain Cook*.

Obeyesekere's criticisms were justified (as Sahlins' rejoinder *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* (1995) established), *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* did illustrate an important trajectory in the contact scholarship: that explorers' contact narratives reveal more about the cultural milieu of the Europeans than they do about that of the indigenes'.⁴¹

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) greatly influenced scholars investigating the west's engagement with the east, for he held that Europe's representations of the orient were not based on any reality, but rather its perception of the orient, and that Europe gained its 'strength and identity' by contrasting itself to this imagined east.⁴² Moreover, the 'tradition of thought, imagery, [and] vocabulary' about the orient enabled the west to 'manage – and even produce – the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively'.⁴³ Said's thesis was mirrored in contact histories such as Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America* (1984) which examines the Spanish encounter with indigenous Americans.⁴⁴ He similarly recognises that one cannot find in the Spanish accounts a 'detailed portrait' of the indigenous people, for these just reflect how the Spanish wanted to see the Americans. Instead, Todorov considers this contact history as an exemplary case for investigating the moral question of how the 'self' deals with the 'other'.

Said's influence is even more apparent in the works of literary scholars. In his essay 'Tales of Distinction: European ethnography and the Caribbean' (1994), Peter Hulme subjects the Spanish explorers' accounts to a detailed close analysis, recognising that the explorers' words were not descriptions of the indigenous people but instead interpretations, which are in turn interpreted by the reader.⁴⁵ He argues that it is through these interpretations that the Caribs were invented, and that this 'enabled European observers to enter into a series of

⁴¹ Marshall Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1995.

⁴² Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. Penguin Books. London, 1978.

⁴³ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

⁴⁴ Todorov, *Conquest of America*.

⁴⁵ Peter Hulme, 'Tales of distinction: European ethnography and the Caribbean', in Stuart B. Schwartz (ed.), *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the*

antagonisms and identifications with the non-European'.⁴⁶ Stephen Greenblatt in *Marvelous Possessions* (1991) similarly recognises that traveller's accounts were distortions of the truth, but holds that they were not systematic, so the falsities can not simply be stripped away to arrive at a secure truth.⁴⁷ Instead of attempting to distinguish between true and false representations, Greenblatt attentively examines the nature of the representational practices that the Europeans deployed, in their attempts to describe what they saw and did in the New World, and he endeavours to resist speaking for and about the indigenes.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, Greenblatt's thesis that explorers' sources can only shed light on the 'European practice of representation'. has not really been embraced in the Australian contact historiography. N.J.B. Plomley, in his *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802* (1983), along with Mulvaney, Dyer, and to a degree, Clendinnen, use the explorers' ethnographies as anthropological sources not for the purpose of understanding culture contact, but in order to understand the nature of Aboriginal pre-contact society, or as Clendinnen describes it, the Australians' 'contest culture'.⁴⁹

Some histories, however, follow Sahlins' lead and use later anthropological sources and indigenous oral histories to supplement the explorers' accounts in order to shed light on the Aboriginal perspectives of contact. Maria Nugent, in *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet* (2005), speculates on the Aboriginal people's reaction to Cook's arrival, suggesting that they were acting in accordance with indigenous protocols performed when meeting strangers.⁵⁰ Nugent's methodology also complies with Hulme's, for she closely reads the *Endeavour* journals, and instead of accepting their words *prima-facie*, interprets them in the light of the contemporary European desires and imaginary. In *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook* (2003), Nicholas

Encounter Between Europeans and Other Peoples in The Early-Modern Era, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1994. 157-97.

⁴⁶ Hulme, 'Tales of Distinction'. 169.

⁴⁷ Stephen Greenblatt. *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonders of the New World*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1991.

⁴⁸ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 4-8.

⁴⁹ Plomley. *Baudin Expedition*, Mulvaney. *Encounters in Place*. Dyer, *French Explorers*, and Clendinnen. *Dancing with Strangers*.

⁵⁰ Nugent, *Botany Bay*.

Thomas similarly narrates the Cook journals in fine detail, using the voyagers' earlier experiences to contextualise their accounts of Aboriginal people and Australia.⁵¹ He also refrains from speculating on what the sources revealed about the Aboriginal cultures and mores, and uses oral histories to flesh out his depiction of the indigenous people. However, these Botany Bay and Endeavour River contact histories only form a small part of both Nugent's and Thomas' much larger projects to trace a cultural history of Botany Bay and chart the history of Cook's three voyages. As such, neither is a sustained examination of first encounters between Australian Aboriginal people and Europeans.

This thesis benefits from this extensive and diverse scholarship; from the explorers' accounts which have been meticulously edited and re-edited over the years, the innovative political and methodological turns which have shaped the trajectory of the historiography, and especially literary studies' emphasis on close reading and investigating the European representational practices. Yet, the thesis makes an original contribution to this field in a number of ways. Firstly, the thesis explores a wider range of expeditions than most histories, which tend to examine either single expeditions or voyagers. Comparing the different accounts highlights the inconsistencies in the Europeans' depictions of Aboriginal men, alleviating the temptation to consider these journals as factual ethnographic sources. Yet, the thesis also has a much narrower temporal scope compared to contact histories such as Mulvaney's *Encounters in Place*. This allows a more detailed examination of the broader intellectual, cultural, and historical contexts, and a more leisurely close reading of individual encounters. Finally, while most Australian contact histories refer in passing to Aboriginal people's physicality, especially in the context of race, this thesis has a much greater focus on bodies. By drawing on the equally broad and dynamic scholarship concerning corporeal histories, this thesis is able to critically examine the Europeans' representation of Aboriginal bodies, and illuminate the interplay between the two groups.

⁵¹ Thomas. *Discoveries*.

iv. fragmented bodies

Histories of the eighteenth-century body have had an immense influence on my approach to examining the history of European and Aboriginal contact. During this period, Daniel Cottom states, knowledge was no longer attained through ‘conjectural innate ideas’. Instead learned men increasingly turned ‘towards the palpable, dissectible, scrutable organs of the body’, and their attention to the viscera and orifices reflected their acknowledgement of ‘the body as a sexual, cultural, social, historical, and political entity existing through its exchanges with other bodies’.⁵² Anne C. Vila argues that the dominant image associated with the Enlightenment philosophe was ‘of opening up, of uncovering what lies hidden in the human heart, mind, and body, and then of representing what one has seen with the feverish talent and enthusiasm of the natural genius’.⁵³ And Elizabeth Grosz contends that ‘human bodies have the wonderful ability, while striving for integration and cohesion, organic and psychic wholeness, to also provide for and indeed produce fragmentations, fracturings, dislocations that orient bodies and body parts towards other bodies and body parts’.⁵⁴ I have identified these ideas about dissection and scrutiny, fragmentation and body parts, and feverish enthusiasm in my explorers’ attempts to observe and describe the Aboriginal men. These ideas are also mirrored in my own approach.

This thesis is organised thematically rather than chronologically, or by expedition, so the eighteenth-century concern with corporeal fragmentation is reflected in its structure. I have fractured the cohesive narratives of the individual voyages, and dislocated the encounters from their immediate temporal and geographical contexts, in order to dissect the explorers’ accounts of the Aboriginal men’s bodies, and reinterpret them within the context of the broader eighteenth-century intellectual culture. Thus the thesis will on occasion revisit particular encounters, though analyse different aspects. The thesis is divided into two sections: the ‘Body in Parts’ and the ‘Body in Action’.

⁵² Cottom, *Cannibals and Philosophers*, 7-9.

⁵³ Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998, 7.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994, 13.

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The first section traces the explorers' observations and descriptions of particular parts of the Aboriginal male body. They scrutinised various body parts, describing each separately, such as skin, hair, nose, belly, calves, brows, eyes, and so on. So this section reflects the way in which the explorers perceived the body, by atomising it into discrete, observable parts which could ostensibly be better apprehended and comprehended. They believed that these individual parts corresponded to, and revealed, the inherent qualities of the Aboriginal men, so expounded on their characters, temperament, intelligence, and drives. Yet, fragmenting the body into these separate parts also allows me to elucidate various Enlightenment ideas about corporeality, by similarly reducing this enormous corpus of complex, interconnected, yet at times contradictory ideas, into more digestible chunks.

The first chapter, *Skin*, surveys the different significances of skin in the eighteenth century, with particular emphasis on the emerging racial taxonomies and various innate qualities associated with black skin. The chapter analyses the explorers' attempts to empirically describe the Aboriginal men's skin colour, and how their differing descriptions reflected their various evaluations of the men. Race was not the only factor which determined ideas about skin, however, so the chapter will also explore how the Europeans' dealt with the fact that the men displayed so much skin through their nakedness. It will also explore their representations of the Aboriginal men's adornment practices, excavating what their accounts reveal about eighteenth-century ideas of modesty, propriety, hygiene, and primitiveness.

The emerging racial discourses also concerned the physiological nature of hair, which is the theme of the second chapter. *Hair* details the explorers' descriptions of the Aboriginal men's hair, both on their heads and bodies, and their debates over whether or not the men had 'woolly' hair. This chapter also addresses the changing cultural attachments to hair, manifested in how it was dressed and worn throughout the eighteenth century. It examines the explorers' diverse representations of the Aboriginal men's hairstyles, both in their written accounts and their illustrations. This investigation reveals the ethnographic shortcomings of these naturalists' representations, and challenges the idea that

we can recover some sense of indigenous cultures in these accounts. *Hair* also begins to chart the explorers' interactions with the Aboriginal men, as they seemingly bond through shaving and grooming.

The face is investigated in the third chapter, which highlights the subjective nature of the explorers' representations of the Aboriginal men. In the eighteenth century the visage was assumed to reveal a person's inner qualities such as intellect and temperament. The Europeans not only observed the men's faces in order to evaluate their attractiveness, but also their characters. *Face* will survey various eighteenth-century ideas about the face, and the different sciences for measuring and divining meaning from it. This chapter also examines their explorers' interactions with the Aboriginal men in greater detail, as their investigations into the men's senses such as sight, smell, taste, and hearing, made them aware of the indigenes' appraisals of their own bodies and culture.

Chapter four, *Tongue*, examines the European understanding of indigenous languages, and considers the way in which communication is embodied. The explorers relied on gestures to communicate with the Aboriginal men, and compiled their lexicons through learning the names of various body parts and miming bodily actions. This chapter also explores the idea of incarceration in the European representational practices. The explorers drew on eighteenth-century theories which assumed that indigenous intellects were imprisoned by their cumbersome tongues, for they were thought to lack grammar and the ability to articulate abstract concepts. More literally, this chapter also explores the ways in which some of the explorers had to resort to capturing and incarcerating indigenous men in order to learn their languages and teach their own.

The second section of the thesis, *Body in Action*, examines the explorers' discussions of the Aboriginal men's roles and activities in daily life, and their speculations on how the indigenous bodies compared to their own. The explorers could not confidently predict the kind of the reception they would receive when they first encountered indigenous peoples, so were very keen to discover whether they were peaceful or belligerent. These expectations were

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partly governed by debates between the proponents of Thomas Hobbes' view that the state of savagery was a state of war, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's rejoinder that natural man was inherently pacific. Chapter five, *Martial Bodies*, discusses the explorers' descriptions of peace and conflict in Aboriginal society, including assessments of their weapons, martial protocols and rituals, trials, and warrior contests. The interactions between Europeans and Aboriginal men will also be investigated as the explorers negotiated the strict instructions they had been given on how to treat the natives, as well as their desire to test the martial capabilities of the indigenous warriors, by measuring their physical strength, and dexterity.

The explorers also represented the Aboriginal men's labour and leisure, and how these were dominated by the assumption that the savage men were essentially indolent. This chapter, *Indolent Bodies*, will trace the various eighteenth-century ideas which elaborated diverse physiological and environmental explanations for why indigenous people were ostensibly languid and ignorant, and investigate how such notions blinded the explorers' to the actual labours that they witnessed the Aboriginal men perform. The explorers' representations of the Aboriginal men's leisure pursuits will also be examined, with a particular emphasis on courtship and sex, which was perceived more as a form of recreation than procreation.

v. some explanatory notes on the terminology

This thesis discusses a number of different peoples, and deciding how to refer to them is a difficult undertaking, as the explorers and the indigenous people alike were diverse and difficult to fix in any one territory or language. My primary aim concerns clarity, so I will use broad terms to refer to the different groups discussed. Firstly, I use masculine biased language because this thesis is about men, and it reflects the politics of the time. Secondly, the expeditions investigated in this thesis were conceived of, and funded by, England and France, so I will refer to the explorers as British and French, even though the individual crewmen involved came from a wider variety of countries. The more

difficult task is justifying the nomenclature for the various indigenous peoples referred to throughout the thesis.

I have opted to use the terms ‘Aborigines’ and ‘Aboriginal people’ because these are the terms most commonly used amongst historians, and they specifically identify Australian indigenous people. However, it is important to acknowledge that the term ‘Aborigine’ has come under fire by Indigenous Australian scholars because of its particular settler-colonial connotations, especially its use within the various Protection Acts which subjectified, quarantined, and oppressed Indigenous Australian peoples. It also has a generic meaning, homogenising numerous peoples. Its adjectival form ‘Aboriginal’ has not received the same level of criticism, but alternative terms are becoming more commonplace. While ‘Aborigine’ and ‘Aboriginal people’ are certainly problematic, alternative terms also have their limitations, as I will now demonstrate.

Clendinnen asserts that “‘Aborigine’ is anachronistic ... [and] also smoothes away the people’s variousness, and their sheer unexpectedness’, so she prefers to ‘call them “Australians”’ because this ‘is what they undoubtedly were’.⁵⁵ However, I find ‘Australian’ just as homogenising, and also anachronistic when discussing the eighteenth century. In the post-Mabo era, some historians have attempted to identify the name of the particular language groups discussed, because it acknowledges indigenous people’s agency and identity, and recognises their specific connections to land. However, this can also be a difficult and somewhat disingenuous undertaking. Since many of the explorers failed to discover or record such names, and tragically, in many instances the local people no longer live in the same areas, modern historians can only achieve this by consulting later language-group maps such as that compiled by Norman Tindale. However, these maps are not infallible, and interpreting them is no easy matter. For example, in describing the encounter between Baudin’s crew and the Shark Bay men, Duyker refers to the latter as the ‘Malkana people’, whereas Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, and John West-

⁵⁵ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 4.

Sooby, identified the same individuals as the ‘Nanda tribe’.⁵⁶ A further hurdle to this is the fact that Aboriginal people frequently travelled long distances to visit others, conduct ceremonies, and trade with other language groups. So at any time a group of Aboriginal people could comprise peoples from different language groups. The First Fleet officers occasionally identified individuals from areas tens of miles away, and in describing the people who regularly visited Port Jackson, recorded many different clan names.

While I use the term ‘Aborigine’, I will also distinguish between mainland Aboriginal people and Tasmanians because the explorers themselves drew such distinctions, considering them discrete peoples. Finally, terms such as ‘savage’, ‘native’, ‘*naturel*’, and ‘Indian’ were used to refer to Australian indigenous people; ‘savages’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Americans’ to refer to indigenous North and South Americans; and ‘Negro’ to describe a broad range of African peoples, were all used in the eighteenth-century, and not always used in a pejorative manner. So I also use these terms in the thesis without quotation marks to reflect the language of the era.

As a final aside, I also use the term ‘Enlightenment’ in a sweeping manner, conflating the thinkers of the French, Scottish, German, and, according to Roy Porter, the British, Enlightenments. While I have elaborated on the ideas of certain individuals and distinguished them from the theories of others, I have also followed Roy Porter’s lead in perceiving the ‘Enlightenment’ as a ‘cluster of overlapping and interacting elites who shared a mission to modernize’. Although I will critique what ‘modernization’ meant to them, and, at the risk of ‘diaboliz[ing] it as a plot of dead white males’, investigate how it impacted on western understandings of Aboriginal men.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Duyker, *François Péron*, 183, and Fornasiero et al. *Encountering Terra Australis*, 258.

⁵⁷ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, Penguin Books, London, 2001.

BODY IN PARTS

SKIN

i. intirely naked and black

The part of the Aboriginal male body that the European explorers found most striking was its skin, or to be more specific, its colour and the fact that so much of it was on display. The Aborigines' blackness and nakedness was remarked on by all of the navigators, and in some of the earlier accounts little else was discussed, for example the only physical description of the Aborigines attributed to the Dutch voyagers of the *Duyfken* was that they were 'black'.¹ Histories of race indicate why the eighteenth-century navigators were so interested in discerning and describing the exact colour of Aboriginal skin. Roxann Wheeler, in her study *The Complexion of Race*, argues that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century skin colour became 'the primary signifier of human difference'.²

It was the first category used by the eminent taxonomer Carolus Linnaeus and the so-called 'father of race' Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in their classifications of the varieties of man. Linnaeus conceived of four different races, each inhabiting one of the four known continents and possessing a different skin colour. Nicholas Hudson claims the taxonomer systematised the 'scattered misconceptions' of travellers and traders, and perceived the bodies of

¹ This description was in the instructions issued to Abel Tasman in 1644, for his second voyage to Australia. ARAKA 771. Batavias Brieff Boek lopende van 15 Januarji tot 29 November Anno 1644. No. 2, fol. 39, cited in Günter Schilder. *Australia Unveiled: The Share of the Dutch navigators in the discovery of Australia*. Olaf Richter (trans). Theatrvm Orbis Terravm Ltd., Amsterdam, 1976, 50.

each race in terms of skin colour, hair type, and humour.³ Linnaeus reported that *Homo afer* was 'black' and phlegmatic, *Homo europaeus* 'fair' and sanguine, *Homo asiaticus* 'pale yellow' and melancholy, and *Homo americanus* 'copper-coloured' and choleric.⁴

Blumenbach elaborated on this schema, renaming the races to reflect exemplary nations rather than continents, and adding a fifth race to incorporate new geographic discoveries. Most significantly he arranged his taxonomy into a hierarchical spectrum. As a committed monogenist Blumenbach believed that all people were descended from a single origin, and that 'Innumerable varieties of mankind run into one another by insensible degrees'. In spite of this, arbitrary divisions existed so mankind could be divided into five main varieties. He 'allotted the first place to the Caucasian[s]', who, to his eye, were the most 'beautiful race' so best approximated 'primeval' people.⁵ He also contended that

² Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2000. 7.

³ Nicholas Hudson, 'From "Nation" to "Race": The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3. 1996, 252.

⁴ Carolus Linnaeus, *The System of Nature*. Vol. 1, Lackington. Allen and Co., London, 1806. repr. in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge (Mass.), 1997, 10-14. Gould posits that this taxonomy was not hierarchically arranged, but that a certain degree of chauvinism was apparent in humours that Linnaeus dealt the various races, as to be sanguine was the considered the best. Stephen Jay Gould, 'The Geometer of Race', *Discover*, 1994, Vol. 15, 65-9, repr. in E. Nathaniel Gates (ed.), *The Concept of "Race" in Natural and Social Science*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York and London, 1-5. It is interesting to note that the importance of humours dates back to the various ancient civilisations including Classical Greeks. Porter observes that in *Airs, Waters, Places* Galen 'attributed national characteristics' to the humours, though this arrangement varied to that given by Linnaeus. Galen deemed the 'peoples of the North' (Europeans) were phlegmatic, Africans bilious, and the Greeks as ideal. Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical history of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1997, 56-8.

⁵ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind' [1795], 3rd ed., *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, trans. and ed., Thomas Bendyshe, London, 1865, reprinted in Earl W. Count (ed.), *This is Race: An Anthology Selected from International Literature on Races of Man*, Henry Schuman, New York, 1950, 34. Twenty years earlier Immanuel Kant also considered that the original man, or 'stem genus' must originate in Europe because the 'portion of the earth between the 31st and 52nd parallels in the Old World ... is rightly held to be that in which the most happy mixture of influences of the colder and hotter regions and also the greatest wealth of earthly creatures is encountered: where man too must have departed the least from his original formation because from here he is equally well prepared for all transplantations'. He posited that since the people who live in this location are 'white brunettes' this represents original man. He then listed the 'First race, very blond (northern European), of damp cold. Second race, Copper-red (America), of dry cold. Third race, Black (Senegambia), of dry heat. Fourth race, Olive-Yellow (Indians), of dry heat'. Immanuel Kant, 'Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen. Zur Ankündigung der Vorlesungen der physischen Geographie im Sommerlehrjahre' [On the Different Races of Man], in *Immanuel Kant's Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. G. Hartenstein, Leipzig, 1867, trans. by E.W. Count, reprinted in

white skin was the 'primitive colour of mankind' since darker pigments resulted from 'degradation' through the effects of climate and diet, or mutation.⁶ From the pinnacle occupied by the 'white' and rosy-cheeked Caucasian his hierarchy 'diverge[d] in both directions into two': on one side through the 'copper-coloured' American to the 'yellow' Mongolian, and on the other the 'Tawny-coloured' Malay and then 'black' Ethiopian.⁷ Of all these skin colours it was black which most piqued the interest of the eighteenth-century philosopher.

Emanuel Chukwudi Eze, in his compendium of eighteenth-century writings on race, has illustrated the Enlightenment's preoccupation with the causes of blackness.⁸ Various theses from eminent European and American philosophers and writers proposed diverse theological, environmental, climatic, humoral, and physiological explanations.⁹ For example, Immanuel Kant attributed it to a 'superabundance of iron particles' in the blood, Oliver Goldsmith to 'poverty and nastiness', the Comte de Buffon to the latitude resided in, Johann Gottfried von Herder to 'sensual appetite[s]', and Benjamin Rush to 'leprosy'.¹⁰ Such speculations contributed to the notion that black skin

Earl W. Count (ed.), *This is Race: An Anthology Selected from International Literature on Races of Man*, Henry Schuman, New York, 1950, 23.

⁶ When discussing mutations he recommends that we 'look for the reason why the brown colour of skin contracted in the torrid zone will last longer in another climate than the white colour of northern animals if they are transported towards the south'. Blumenbach, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 34-6.

⁷ In his descriptions of the different varieties Blumenbach lists their typical skin colour, hair type, skull shape, facial features, and then charts the regions they inhabit. Blumenbach, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 36. Stephen Jay Gould argues that Blumenbach's hierarchical arrangement lent an empirical authority to long-held beliefs in the superiority of Europeans and inaugurated the scientific racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this view has been refuted. Gould, 'Geometer of Race', and Thomas Junker, 'Blumenbach's Racial Geometry', *Isis*, Vol. 89, No. 3, 1998, 498-501.

⁸ Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*.

⁹ See also Claudia Benthien, *skin: on the cultural border between self and the world*, trans. by Thomas Dunlap, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, 145-162.

¹⁰ Kant, 'Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen', 22; Oliver Goldsmith, 'Observations on the Causes of the Black Complexion of the Negroes', *Universal Magazine*, 1795, 319-20, cited in Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550-1807*, Frank Cass, London, 1978, 80; Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, *Natural history, general and particular, by the Count de Buffon. Translated into English. Illustrated with three hundred and one copper-plates, and occasional notes and observations by the translator*, trans. William Smellie, 8 Vols. Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, London, 1781, Vol. 3, 132; Johann Gottfried von Herder, 'Organisation of the Peoples of Africa', in *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, trans. T. Churchill, Bergman Publishers, London, 1800, repr. in Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*, 77; Benjamin Rush, 'Observations intended to favour a supposition that the black color (as it is called) of the Negroes is derived from LEPROSY', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol.

was anomalous and deviant. Yet skin colour was not only significant in the eighteenth century because of the emergent race sciences; the polar opposites, black and white, had long been conceived in Christian thought as reflecting the dyad of sin and virtue. Alden Vaughan noted that in most of the European languages,

the word for “black” carried a host of disparaging connotations. In Spanish, for example, *negro* also meant gloomy, dismal, unfit, and wretched; in French, *noir* also connoted foul, dirty, base and wicked; ... and “black” has comparable pejorative implications in Elizabethan and Stuart England.¹¹

On the other hand, in the European imagination white skin has long been associated with the divine light representing purity and righteousness. For example, in the medieval Christian romance *The King of Tars*, the sultan’s ‘skin, that had been black and loathsome, became all white through God’s grace, and was spotless without blemish’,¹² and in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* Duke Vincentio commends Isabella noting that ‘The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good’.¹³ By the eighteenth century white skin was also seen in a positive light because unlike black skin it could reveal one’s emotions and passions. Oliver Goldsmith celebrated the Europeans’ ability to blush, claiming that ‘The fair complexion seems, if I may so express it, as a transparent covering to the soul; all the variations of the passions, even expressions of joy and sorrow, flows to the cheek’.¹⁴ Although not explicitly

4. 1799, cited in Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1979, 30.

¹¹ Alden T. Vaughan, ‘From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4, 1982, 920.

¹² ‘His hide, that blac and lithely was/ Al white biom, thurth Godes gras./ And clere withouten blame’. *The King of Tars*, ed. Judith Perryman, Heidelberg Middle English Texts, Heidelberg, 1980, cited in Thomas Hahn, ‘The Difference the Middles Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2001, 15.

¹³ William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, III, i. 179-82, 814, cited in Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2004, 20.

¹⁴ Oliver Goldsmith, *A History of the Earth, and Animated Nature*, Vol. 1, London, 1774, 375, cited in Angela Rosenthal, ‘Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture’, *Art History*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2004, 574. Thomas Jefferson made a similar observation in 1787 asking ‘Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immovable black which covers all the emotions of the other race?’ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, English ed., London, 1787, cited in Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes to the Negro, 1550-1812*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1968, 458. By the nineteenth century this ability to express emotion through the suffusion of colour through the skin was not

discussing white skin, encyclopaedist Denis Diderot noticed that changes in skin colour reflected one's temper, so pondered 'Does a woman have the same colouring when anticipating pleasure as when in its embrace or taking leave of it?'¹⁵

Skin was also significant in the eighteenth century for what it revealed about one's health. Historian Barbara Duden, argues that skin was 'a surface on which the inside revealed itself' as it was then thought to be porous, absorbing and seeping various fluids.¹⁶ As such Claudia Benthien contends that skin was a 'therapeutic organ' and the site for curing a range of internal ailments.¹⁷ Skin is also significant because it is the organ thorough which we both touch and sense being touched. According to Radhika Mohanram this sensation was associated with the libido and sexuality during the middle ages and renaissance, and in the eighteenth century was considered the lowest of all the senses. Although, she does note that Herder posited that the 'feel of an object, produces a desire to name it', so argues that 'touch is linked to the origins of languages'.¹⁸

While skin was significant in the eighteenth century because of what it was thought to reveal about the body and soul's internal qualities, when it came to black skin only two factors really mattered: its colour and its exposure. The explorers went to great lengths to identify and articulate the Aboriginal men's pigment, though were often hindered by the poverty of their own vocabularies as well as Aboriginal cosmetic practices. They were also struck by the Aborigines' nudity: their unimpeded gaze unleashed a range of seemingly

just 'preferable' but became a sign of humanity. The German naturalist and philosopher Lorenz Oken stated that 'The ape man is the moor. The interior of his body does not show through his skin, which, like plants, is characteristically coloured – he is black and cannot display his inner emotions by means of colour. The human man is white. His insides show through the skin because the latter is transparent, uncoloured. A person who is able to blush is a human being: the person who is not is a moor'. Lorenz Oken, *Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie*. Fromann, Jena, Vol. 3. 1811, 355, cited in Benthien, *skin*, 152.

¹⁵ Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, ed. and trans. John Goodman, Vol. 1, *The Salon of 1765 and Note on Painting*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995, 201, cited in Benthien, *skin*, 103.

¹⁶ Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlop, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1991, 120 & 123, cited in Benthien, *skin*, 39-40.

¹⁷ She describes a range of various treatments such as applying poultices and blood-letting. Benthien, *skin*, 41.

¹⁸ Radhika Mohanram, 'Dermographia: Written on the Skin, or How the Irish Became White in India', *European Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2005, 254.

puerile interests in the Aboriginal body which have generally been ignored by historians, but which shed a new light on the eighteenth-century concerns over modesty, decorum, discipline, and the civilising process. Their examination of Aboriginal skin also introduced them to various indigenous cultural practices. The subsequent representations of those practices exposed both how difficult it was to translate such cross-cultural encounters, as well as the lack of interest explorers gave to the attempt. This chapter will examine the explorers' representations of Aboriginal skin colour, nakedness, indigenous methods of adorning their skin, and also European attempts to clothe them.

ii. blackness

Although William Dampier was not the first European to land in Australia his was the earliest published account, and one widely read by the later eighteenth-century explorers. Dampier landed at King Sound on the north-west coast of the continent in January 1688. He met with the local Aboriginal people on numerous occasions and even attempted to employ them as water-carriers without much success. On describing their general appearance Dampier delivered his infamous account that they were 'the miserablest People in the World'. The renowned buccaneer observed that 'The Colour of the Skins, both of their Faces and the rest of their Body is Coal-black like that of the Negroes of Guinea'.¹⁹ When he returned to these shores in 1699, this time arriving further south at Shark Bay, he again met some Aboriginal men and simply stated that they had 'the same black skins' as the people he met on his previous journey.²⁰ While his descriptions are very brief they are important because they informed the expectations of the next British voyagers to Australian waters.

Three weeks after having made the decision to leave New Zealand and sail towards the uncharted east coast of New Holland, the crew of the *Endeavour* set eyes on Aboriginal people for the first time. Having languished in their sticky clothes in the sweltering heat and suffering the musty odour of the

¹⁹ William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World: The Journal of a Buccaneer*, Mark Becken (ed.), Hummingbird Press, London, 1998 [1697], 218.

²⁰ William Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland, &c., in the year 1699*, James Knapston, London, 1703, 148.

ship, the crew were eager for any distractions and entertainment. They were excited to awake on the 22nd April 1770 and finally be 'so near the Shore as to distinguish several people on the Sea beach'.²¹ The captain, James Cook, strongly suspected that this landmass was New Holland, and having read Dampier's popular travelogues expected that the inhabitants would be coal black. So with great confidence he proposed that the people on the shore 'appear'd to be of a very dark or black Colour'.²² Joseph Banks, the *Endeavour's* botanist, and more significantly a substantial benefactor to the expedition, stared through his eye glass at the people and concurred, noting that they were 'enormously black'.²³

Afterwards they must have discussed the inhabitants' skin colour and realised that in their excitement about finally setting sights on people they had merely observed what they had expected to see. When writing his journal Cook stated that 'whether this was the real colour of their skins or the C[lo]thes they might have on I know not'. Banks, being even more candid, added that 'so far the prejudices which we had built on Dampier's account influence us that we fancied we could see their Colour when we could scarce distinguish whether or not they were men'. On the 28th they entered Botany Bay and finally had a close enough encounter with the Aboriginal people to confidently describe them in detail.

Perhaps chastened by his earlier eagerness, Cook refrained from describing their skin colour until the 6th of May, even though he had seen various 'natives' almost every day in between.²⁴ This time he carefully recorded that they were 'of a very dark brown colour but not black'.²⁵ Meanwhile Banks described their skin colour the first day they entered the bay. Still smarting from

²¹ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume One: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1955, 301.

²² Cook, *Journals*, 1: 301.

²³ Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey*, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 19.

²⁴ It is unlikely that this restraint was a consequence of Cook's disinterest in their skin colour not only because of his initial reaction, but also because Dampier referred to the Aborigines as 'black men' every time he mentioned them.

²⁵ Cook, *Journals*, 1: 312.

his earlier display of 'prejudice', he pointedly refuted Dampier's comparison of Aborigines to the 'Negroes of Guinea', stating that 'The people were blacker than any we have seen in the Voyage tho by no means negroes'.²⁶ Later, the botanist would explain that his meticulous description of their colour was a result of his ethnographic expertise: 'As for their colour they would undoubtedly be call'd blacks by anyone not us'd to consider attentively the colours of different Nations'.²⁷ His crewmate James Matra, however, obviously lacked Banks' keen eye and wasted no time in quibbling over their exact shade, simply stating that the men were 'intirely naked and black'.²⁸

After their brief sojourn at Botany Bay the British then sailed north and in July anchored at Endeavour River to carry out repairs. Here they had much more contact with the indigenes so Banks was able to give a more detailed description of their skin colour. The explorers 'had connections' with a 'tribe' consisting of some 21 people, including 12 men, all of whom were 'completely coverd with dirt'. These 'connections' must have been quite close, for Banks, in his effort to ascertain 'What their absolute colour is' attempted to clean the dirt off one of them by 'spitting upon [his] finger and rubbing' their skin. He found that this intimate action 'alterd the colour very little', so determined that their skin most closely 'resembled that of Chocolate'.²⁹ Sydney Parkinson, the expedition's artist, thought these people's skin colour 'like that of wood-soot', a more precise description than that which he recorded for the 'very dark colour[ed]' people at Botany Bay.³⁰ The explorers were fascinated by the

²⁶ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 24.

²⁷ He continues his explanation, stating 'myself should never have thought of such distinctions had I not seen the effect of Sun and wind upon the natives of the South sea Islands, where many of the Better sort of people who keep themselves close at home are nearly white as Europeans, while the poorer sort, oblig'd in their business of fishing &c. to expose their naked bodies to all the inclemencies of the Climate, have some among them but little lighter than the New Hollanders'. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 98.

²⁸ James Matra, *A Journal of a Voyage round the World, In His Majesty's Ship Endeavour, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, and 1771; Undertaken in Pursuit of Natural Knowledge, at the Desire of the ROYAL SOCIETY*, T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, London, 1771, reproduced in Alan Frost, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton Vic., 1995, 58.

²⁹ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 98. Unfortunately he did not record the Aboriginal response to this impromptu cleaning.

³⁰ Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in his Majesty's Ship The Endeavour*, Stanfield Parkinson, London, 1773, Australiana Facsimile Editions A34, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1972, 147 and 134.

Aboriginal men's skin, for they evidently discussed its colour on various occasions. Cook, in his general overview of the 'Natives of this Country' borrowed from both Banks and Parkinson by concluding that 'their skins [are] the Colour of Wood soot or of a dark Chocolate'.³¹ It is difficult to ascertain exactly what the different explorers had in mind as they distinguished between the various shades of dark brown, but each degree of difference was clearly considered very significant, both for what it suggested about the Aboriginal people's degree of degradation (as delineated by the likes of Blumenbach), and also for what it revealed about the acuity of the explorer's eye.

Just as Cook had been armed with Dampier's description of New Holland the First Fleet officers were furnished with the *Endeavour* journals. The British settlers arrived in January 1788 and quickly established their colony at Port Jackson. Despite creating an outpost of the empire, their journals still read as explorer accounts as they only had a slight knowledge of the country based on Cook's brief descriptions, and explored many uncharted areas such as Sydney Harbour, Broken Bay to the north, and Parramatta and the Blue Mountains to the west. Furthermore, many of the officers who published their journals returned to Britain after a four year commission so were not permanent settlers.

One of these visitors was the marine Lieutenant Watkin Tench. He was a well-read young man and quickly established that he was familiar with the *Endeavour* accounts by refuting Cook's description of the colour of the Aboriginal people. Within his first month of arriving he wrote a very detailed ethnography of the 'natives of New South Wales', and noted at various points that the First Fleeters were 'induced to call into question the accounts which Mr Cook had given of this people'.³² He pompously claimed that 'Their colour Mr Cook is inclined to think rather a deep chocolate than an absolute black, ... but I am of the opinion, all the washing in the world would not render them two

³¹ Cook, *Journals*. 1: 395.

³² Watkin Tench, 1788: *Comprising 'A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay' and 'A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson'*, Tim Flannery (ed.), The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793], 51.

degrees less black than an African Negro'.³³ Almost one year later Tench had the opportunity to test this thesis. Arabanoo, who had been captured on the 31st December 1789, had been promptly bathed by the British: 'immers[ed] in a tub of water and soap' he was 'washed and scrubbed from head to foot'. Tench had the 'honour to perform' some parts of this 'ablution' just so he could finally discover the Aborigines' 'real colour', and happily concluded that 'they are as black as the lighter cast of the African Negroes'.³⁴

While this was not an unambiguous claim, many of his fellow officers agreed, and instead of deliberating over exact shades of dark brown like the *Endeavour* explorers, they pondered over the differing degrees of black. In light of the Enlightenment discourse on skin colour, and Blumenbach's hierarchical spectrum such distinctions were significant as they suggested that the Aboriginal people were more 'degraded' than Cook thought, which had a great bearing on how they were perceived. Just like Banks, William Bradley recognised that the unguents the Aborigines used masked the colour of their skin, although assumed it was merely dirt, stating 'they are so dirty that it is hard to tell the real colour of their hides' but posited that it 'is nearly black'.³⁵ Using the word 'hide' is quite unusual and suggests his evaluations are disparaging; Steven Connor suggests that a hide 'evokes disgust, disgrace and horror', because it is a skin 'scoured away from the body'.³⁶ Although Bradley

³³ Tench, 1788, 52.

³⁴ Tench, 1788, 97.

³⁵ William Bradley, *A Voyage to New South Wales: The Journal of Lieutenant William Bradley RN of HMS Sirius, 1786-1792*, Facsim. Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1969, 73. John Hunter similarly noted that the Aborigines were 'abominably filthy', and though he did elaborate in a disparaging tone, he recognised that they possessed 'skin', which he described as a 'rusty kind of black', and also acknowledged that he had seen 'many of the women almost as light as a mulatto'. John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island with the Discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean since the publication of Phillip's Voyage, compiled from the official Papers: Including the Journals of Governors Phillip and King, and of Lieut. Ball; and the Voyages from the First Sailing of the Sirius in 1787 to the Return of that Ship's Company to England in 1792*, John Stockdale, London, 1793. Australiana Facsimile Editions No. 148, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1968, 58. Although the surgeon Arthur Bowes Smyth thought that the men were a 'dark black colour' and incorrectly asserted that they did 'not besmear their hair or Bodies with any kind of Oil or paint as many Indians do'. Arthur Bowes Smyth, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon on Lady Penryth 1787-89*, Paul G. Fidlon and R.J. Ryan (eds), Australian Document Library, Sydney, 1979, 57 and 58.

³⁶ Connor, *Book of Skin*, 11. He illustrates this by noting the difference between the words for 'skin' and 'hide' in Greek (*chros* and *derma*) and Latin (*cutis* and *pellis*).

probably did not have this association in mind, his intention must have been derogatory because 'hide' most commonly refers to an animal's skin.³⁷

Lieutenant Phillip Gidley King was less offensive about the Aboriginal men's apparent dirtiness, but still considered it important to ascertain their true colour. He had been absent for the first two years of the settlement's foundation because shortly after arriving with the First Fleet he went on to lead the settlement at Norfolk Island. Consequently he did not have much close contact with Aboriginal people, so when he returned to Port Jackson in April 1790 he took a great interest in Bennelong, a young man who had been kidnapped the previous December in order to initiate 'intercourse with the natives'.³⁸ King observed, 'now that the dirt is washed from his skin, we find his colour is a dark black.'³⁹ This description is striking for it is one of few which point out Bennelong's colour. Tench, Hunter, and the governor, Arthur Phillip who took an immense shine to the young man while he lived in the colony, refrained from mentioning his pigment. Perhaps this was because they were aware of the negative connotations associated with blackness, and did not want to taint Bennelong with whom they had developed a close relationship?

Alternatively, prolonged contact with the Aboriginal people may have led the Britons to realise that they could not make such definitive pronouncements like Tench's initial claim of black over brown, because skin colour varied from individual to individual. After four years in Port Jackson the Judge-Advocate of the colony David Collins stated in his ethnographic overview that 'The colour of these people is not uniform', and that some 'were nearly as black as the African negro; while others have exhibited only a copper

³⁷ Banks also used this term when he described washing their skin with his own saliva. He thought that the dirt 'seemd to have stuck to their hides from the day of their birth without their once having attempted to remove it'. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 98.

³⁸ The British recorded that Bennelong went by five different names, but most of the officers called him variations on Bennelong, however, King used his preferred name of Wolle-warrè. Phillip Gidley King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 269, and Tench, 1788, 117.

³⁹ King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', 269.

or Malay colour'.⁴⁰ Noting this variation is an important remark, because he employs the same terminology used by Linnaeus and other Enlightenment philosophers to distinguish the African and American races in their taxonomies. Such an observation undermines the value of these arbitrary classifications, and is perhaps the reason why Tench, in his extensive summary of the Aboriginal people, completely omitted any mention of their skin colour. After four years perhaps he realised that such discussions were meaningless.

Matthew Flinders, the English voyager who circumnavigated Australia in 1802, explicitly maintained that there was little need to discourse on their skin colour, not because it was so varied, but because he considered it monotonously consistent. While off the coast of Keppel Bay in Queensland he stated that 'It is scarcely necessary to say, that these people are almost black, and go entirely naked, since none of any other colour, or regularly wearing clothes, have been seen in any part of Terra Australis'.⁴¹ This claim openly contradicts that of Collins, and is valuable because it highlights just how difficult and arbitrary it is to accurately distinguish skin colour and achieve a universal consensus on the terms employed. Tench unwittingly recognised this when he noted with some amusement that the Aborigines had a different frame of reference for white skin colour than the Britons. 'It must be remarked' he wrote, 'that they translate the epithet white when they speak of us, not by the name which they assign to this white earth, but by that with which they distinguish the palm of their hands'.⁴² So it is evident that what was chocolate, wood-soot, copper, or dark black, to some explorers, was simply 'almost black' to those with a less discerning eye.

Other explorers did not benefit from such a long stay as the First Fleet officers or were not as crude as Flinders, so were just as keen to discuss the

⁴⁰ David Collins. *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*. Brian Fletcher (ed.), A.H & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society. Sydney, 1975, 459.

⁴¹ Matthew Flinders. *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. G&W Nicol. Pall Mall, 1814, 30. He does however describe the skin colour of the Murray Islanders of the Torres Strait as 'chocolate', perhaps because he recognised that they were ethnically different to mainland New Hollanders, despite claiming that their 'features and hair appeared to be similar to those of the natives of New South Wales'. Flinders. *Voyage*, 110.

⁴² Tench, 1788, 249.

Aboriginal men's skin colour as the Britons had been when they first arrived. They too, however, also seemed to quickly tire of the exercise. The French scientific expedition sanctioned by Napoleon and led by Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin closely charted the west and south coasts of Australia and made detailed ethnographic observations in Tasmania. The naturalist who authored the official publication, François Péron, initially recorded the skin colour of the Aboriginal people they met whilst in Western Australia, but evidently gave up this practice because he considered it a futile exercise.⁴³ After almost one year in Australian waters he reported the geographical surveyor Pierre Faure's brief account of the Aboriginal people of Western Port, on the eastern south coast in a rather lacklustre way, completely omitting any mention of their skin colour. He acknowledged that 'however imperfect [the observations] may be, they apply so exactly to the different nations, ... that no doubt can remain, as to the whole of the hordes having descended from the same race'.⁴⁴

Like Flinders, whom he had accidentally met at Encounter Bay in April 1802, he saw all of the Aboriginal people as essentially the same. His crewmates had a similar jaundiced eye, and only continued to mention skin colour when they discovered a surprising fact. For example, on their return voyage to Europe Baudin's ships stopped at Nuyts Land, on the western south coast, and near Bald Island met with some Aboriginal men. The midshipman Joseph Ransonnet's report suggests that the Aboriginal men were friendly and accommodating, allowing the strangers to conduct a very thorough inspection of them, for he states that 'The insides of their mouths appeared as black as the outside of their bodies'.⁴⁵

Tasmania received a number of visits throughout the eighteenth century, though not all resulted in encounters with its seemingly elusive indigenous inhabitants. Neither the Dutch explorer Abel Janszoon Tasman, who first

⁴³ Péron saw a 'brown colour[ed]' man when they first landed at Geographe Bay. François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 60.

⁴⁴ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 269.

⁴⁵ François Péron and Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage of the Discovery to the Southern Lands: Book IV, Comprising Chapters XXII to XXXIV*, 2nd Ed., 1824, Christine Cornell (trans.). The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, 122.

discovered the island in 1642, nor the crew of the *Adventure*, Cook's companion ship on his second voyage which landed in 1773, saw any Tasmanians. Other expeditions such as that led by Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne in 1772, Cook, on his third voyage in 1777, and Bruny d'Entrecasteaux's first visit in 1792, had very limited encounters with the Tasmanians, which contributed to the mystery surrounding these people. Consequently, when the opportunity arose, the explorers were keen to document as much as possible about the shy islanders, and most considered them to be a separate race to the mainland New Hollanders. Their skin colour was usually one of the first descriptions that the explorers recorded.

Marion-Dufresne's discussion of the 'Diemenlanders'' skin colour arose from rather macabre circumstances. His landing had initially been welcomed by the Tasmanians, perhaps because he had the foresight to try to minimise their difference to the locals by presenting themselves naked. After anchoring Marion-Dufresne and some of his men approached the shore in three boats. Upon seeing them, the Tasmanians lit a fire and watched their progress, shouting and gesturing at them when they were finally 'within earshot' of the beach. Marion-Dufresne evaluated the scene and concluding that they seemed friendly enough 'made two sailors undress and go ashore, unarmed, carrying with them some small presents'.⁴⁶ The Tasmanians 'came leaping to meet' the naked seamen, 'two big boys, well built and very white', then ceremoniously presented them with a torch, and seemed to delight in their gifts of mirrors and necklaces.⁴⁷ Marion-Dufresne's boat then landed, and although he was clothed the captain was similarly welcomed.

Upon the third long-boat's approach, however, the Tasmanians became 'alarmed' by the growing invasion so 'made threats to prevent it from landing'.⁴⁸ The men attacked the Frenchmen with spears and stones, and after

⁴⁶ Le Dez, *Extrait d'un nouveau voyage en australazie en 1772*. Archives Nationales, Paris, (Archives Privées), Fond Bougainville 155 AP 3 pièce 4. Edward Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne 1642 & 1772*. St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 31.

⁴⁷ Le Dez, *Extrait*, 31.

⁴⁸ Ambroise Bernard Marie Le Jar du Clesmeur, *Account of a voyage in the South Seas and the Pacific beginning in 1771 ...*, Maryse Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of*

chasing them down to the water's edge were fired upon by the visitors. Some of the men fell to the ground, but promptly sprang up and retreated towards the bush. The Frenchmen pursued the fleeing Tasmanians, and at the end of a trail of blood found the corpse of a man who had been struck by their shot. Not wasting this opportunity to discover more about the Diemenlanders, the explorers promptly examined the body.

Ambroise Bernard Le Jar Du Clesmeur, commander of Marion-Dufresne's companion ship the *Marquis de Castries*, simply noted that the Tasmanians' 'colour is black'.⁴⁹ Comparing his account to that of the party who inspected the dead man, it seems unlikely that Du Clesmeur was actually one of their number, for his description contradicts that of his crewmates. Julien-Marie Crozet, Marion-Dufresne's second-in-command on the *Mascarin*, acknowledged that 'he seemed black', but to be sure, they carefully washed the body, and then 'found that his natural colour was reddish, and that it was only smoke and dirt which made him look so dark'.⁵⁰ Ensign Paul Chevillard de Montesson claimed the man was 'light red', and clarified the description by noting that it was 'very close to that of the Malambours of Madagascar'.⁵¹

Though macabre, washing the dead man's body gave Marion-Dufresne's men a clearer indication of the Tasmanians' skin colour, as other explorers still considered them to be black. When Cook landed in Adventure Bay on the south-east of the island on his third voyage, his men thought that they were 'a dull

Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne 1642 & 1772, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 22.

⁴⁹ Du Clesmeur, *Account*, 22.

⁵⁰ Julien Crozet, *Journal of the voyage of M. Marion-Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand*, Edward Duyker (trans.), Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 26.

⁵¹ Paul Chevillard de Montesson, *Journal of the voyage of M. Marion-Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand*, Edward Duyker (trans.), Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 47. Plomley notes that 'Malambours' may be a corruption of Antaimanambondro, a small Malagasy ethnic group. Plomley, *Baudin Expedition*, 47n.

black'⁵² even though they recognised that the Tasmanians deliberately blackened their skin. William Anderson, Cook's naturalist and surgeon, commented that 'it would appear as if they sometimes heightend their black colour by smutting their bodys' with charcoal. His interaction with the Tasmanians must have been very limited because he only realised this when he observed that they left a mark 'on any clean substance [such] as white paper when they handled it', and not because he detected any unevenness in the application of their cosmetic.⁵³

Despite finding these tantalising traces, Anderson did not speculate on why the Tasmanians darkened their skin or what their true colour was, which is curious considering some of the contemporary reflections on the matter. It was recognised in the eighteenth century that certain peoples deliberately blackened their skin, and it was thought that such practices influenced ideas about the variety of man. Buffon claimed that the 'Hottentots' of southern Africa 'would only be of a tawny colour if they did not blacken their skin with grease and paint', and speculated that their natural colour revealed that they were 'not true Negroes, but blacks beginning to approach towards whiteness'.⁵⁴ Other explorers contemplated the motive behind the practice in Tasmania, but seemed to be more concerned with ascertaining the islanders' unadulterated pigment.

D'Entrecasteaux first visited Tasmania in 1792 during his voyage in search of the unfortunate La Perouse who had gone missing four years earlier, but he did not have any prolonged encounters with the locals until his return visit in 1793. Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, d'Entrecasteaux's captain on the *Recherche*, described his first encounter with the Tasmanians at Blackwater Lagoon on Bruny Island in great detail, for they spent the better part of a day with a local family, eating, conversing, entertaining, and walking with them. He

⁵² William Anderson, 'A Journal of a Voyage Made in His Majesty's Sloop *Resolution*', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Vol.3, Part II, 785.

⁵³ Anderson, 'A Journal', 3(II): 786.

⁵⁴ Buffon, *Natural history*, 3: 155-6. Buffon further evidences his claim with an account provided to him by Tavernier: 'The Dutch, says he, carried off a Hottentot girl a few days after her birth, brought her up among themselves, and she soon became as white as any European. From this, he concludes, that all the Hottentots would be equally fair, if they did not perpetually daub themselves with dirt and black paints'. Buffon, *Natural history*, 3: 158.

observed that the men blackened their faces with charcoal but could tell from their bodies that their 'natural colour' was 'lighter than that of the African negroes and which one can compare to slightly dark copper'.⁵⁵ His second pilot, Joseph Raoul, speculated on the meaning of this 'hideous' cosmetic. Seeing that they appeared 'forced to supply the men with food'. Raoul immediately assumed that the women were subjugated by their husbands, and upon noticing that 'The women do not blacken any part of their body' he reasoned that the charcoal was a 'luxury' for the men, reflecting their position of power over the ostensibly weaker sex.⁵⁶

This hypothesis was too ambitious to derive from his single day of interaction with the family, and was dashed by later explorers who observed women also blackening their skin.⁵⁷ However, this example reveals the fact that most of the explorers' encounters with Aboriginal people were brief and infrequent, so their observations were fleshed out with conjectures which often went begging for evidence. Perhaps it was this which led some explorers to seemingly less ambitious theorising: Baudin, during his stay in Tasmania in 1802 posited that 'perhaps it is because they do not think themselves black enough that they daub various parts of their faces with charcoal'.⁵⁸ This conjecture may seem quite obvious, but it suggests a nascent cultural relativism which was quite rare during the eighteenth century.

The fact that non-Europeans appreciated or even preferred their own physical attributes, especially those deplored in the west, was received with some surprise. For example, Buffon, in his description of the 'Negroes of the island of Goree' observed that they

⁵⁵ Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting with the Natives, 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 282.

⁵⁶ Joseph Raoul, 'Extracts from the journal of Joseph Raoul, Second pilot on the *Recherche*, for 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 304-5.

⁵⁷ Nicolas Baudin, *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*, Christine Cornell (trans.), Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, 324.

⁵⁸ Baudin, *Journal*, 303.

are so fond of a black shining complexion, that they despise [any who] want this perfection, in the same manner as tawny men are despised by the Europeans. ... They believe their country to be the finest in the universe; and that they are the handsomest men in the world, because they are the blackest.⁵⁹

The explorers echoed Buffon's surprise when they realised that the Aborigines not only liked their own black skin, but that they might have considered white skin to be unsightly and abnormal.

On one occasion, when Baudin's men met with a group of Tasmanian women, François Péron and Sub-Lieutenant François Antoine Boniface Heirisson allowed them to blacken their white faces as a way of ingratiating themselves to the group. Péron thought that one of the women noticed him in particular and approached him with some charcoal which she had taken from her 'rush basket', crumbling it in her hands and applying to his face 'a coating of this black makeup'. He was then surprised to find they 'seemed to become the subject of great admiration to the women', for they were congratulated 'on the new charms [they] had just acquired'.⁶⁰ This experience was a revelation for Péron, for he later stated 'Thus it appears that the fairness of skin, of which Europeans are so vain, is an absolute defect, and a sort of deformity, which, in these distant climates, must yield to the palm of beauty to the blackness of coal'.⁶¹ It was not only the blackness of Aboriginal skin, be it real or enhanced, which caught the explorers' eye, however, for the other aspect which led to great speculation was the fact that so much of it was visible. The explorers were intrigued by their nakedness, for both prurient reasons as well as a concern over their sensitivity to the cold.

iii. nakedness

All of the explorers stated that Aboriginal people went unclothed, for example, Crozet observed that 'All were equally naked, men and women'.⁶² Yet nakedness is not a neutral state, modern scholarship suggests that the naked

⁵⁹ Buffon, *Natural history*, 3: 145.

⁶⁰ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 198.

⁶¹ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 198.

⁶² Crozet, *Journal*, 24.

body is 'represented and constrained by codes of behaviour, contexts, differentiation from the clothed body, loose significations and cultural rituals'.⁶³ So it must be asked what exactly constituted nakedness for the explorer? Baudin described a Tasmanian as 'naked from head to foot, *except* for a skin or piece of bark covering his back'.⁶⁴ while Hesmivy d'Auribeau thought that 'These inhabitants were absolutely naked *and* wore pieces of kangaroo skin more as an ornament than anything else'.⁶⁵ It might seem overreaching to suggest that these two voyagers have different conceptions of nakedness and clothing, but slight distinctions between these accounts highlight an ethnographic absurdity.

Ann Little, in her discussion of clothing on the New England frontier, notes that the English defined the Native Americans as naked despite describing their 'dress and adornment'. She states that 'Although it seems contradictory to describe the apparel worn by "naked" Indians this paradox has an ideological logic': to 'signify Indian difference'.⁶⁶ Fellow historian Margaret Hunt notes that nakedness not only marked racial or cultural difference but also class difference, for in the eighteenth century the English poor were known to go unclad when they had to wash their only clothes, or sell them when 'desperate for food or rent money'.⁶⁷ However, in regard to indigenes it was not just a marker of "'one of Those Things 'We' Are Not'",⁶⁸ according to Wheeler 'Nakedness signified "a negation of civilisation"'.⁶⁹ These interpretations are borne out in Raoul's description of the Tasmanians: 'There is no need to say that some of them wore anything except some pieces of skin of the kangaroo ...

⁶³ In his study *Cover* draws on the work of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and more specifically Paul Bindrim and Elizabeth Grosz. Rob Cover, 'The Naked Subject: Nudity, Context and Sexualization in Contemporary Culture', *Body and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2003, 53.

⁶⁴ Baudin, *Journal*, 173. My emphasis.

⁶⁵ For example 'a belt around their waist and around their ankles'. D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 287 and 285. My emphasis.

⁶⁶ Ann M. Little, "'Shoot That Rogue, for he Hath an Englishman's Coat On!'" Cultural Cross-Dressing on the New England Frontier, 1620-1769', *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 2001, 246-7. Wheeler concurs, claiming that 'Other than Christianity, clothing was another category of difference that Europeans saw as crucial to their own and others' identity'. Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 17.

⁶⁷ Margaret Hunt, 'Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1993, 344.

⁶⁸ Hunt, 'Racism, Imperialism', 344.

⁶⁹ Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 17-9.

People in their primitive state are only naked!'.⁷⁰ Hence, for Raoul nakedness was the natural corollary of the fact that they lived in a state of nature, despite some of them, albeit twenty years later, being commended by Baudin 'for the elegance of their dress'.⁷¹

These inconsistencies in conceptions of nakedness are clarified by Anderson who described the Tasmanians as 'quite naked and destitute of every ornament'. Later, he observed that this was to be expected 'for this is not the only nation that go thus expos'd'. He then detailed the various states of undress amongst other indigenous peoples he had so far witnessed on his voyage:

the women of Terra del Fuego go coverd with a seal skin nearly in the same manner, and the men there have their privitys expos'd as much as those of New Holland though they cover their shoulders with a skin. The men amongst the great Cyclades and at new Caledonia indeed cover the Penis but leave the Scrotum expos'd. Several of those in the last place even neglect covering the Penis and go entirely naked.⁷²

So here we see the crucial marker of nakedness: having one's genitals uncovered.⁷³ Needless to say, to the eighteenth-century European eye the sight of 'privitys' seemingly on display transgressed western notions of modesty and decorum.⁷⁴ Rob Cover argues that 'In the biblical tradition ... nakedness, as the exposure of the genitals, cannot be disconnected from sexuality', so public displays were equated with immodesty, sexual availability, or licentiousness.⁷⁵

However, some of the explorers were open-minded enough to realise that this was not necessarily the case. Banks, drawing on theological inspiration for his rumination, grandly stated 'Of cloth[e]s they had not the least part but naked as even our general father was before his fall, they seemd no more

⁷⁰ Raoul, 'Extracts', 306.

⁷¹ Baudin states that 'two were remarkable for the elegance of their dress. One wore the skin of a kangaroo, or some other animal, which covered his shoulders and his chest right down to the navel'. Baudin, *Journal*, 303.

⁷² Anderson, 'A Journal', 3(II): 788-9.

⁷³ Banks was similarly surprised that they did not cover their genitals, for he says of the Endeavour River people: 'Cloaths they had none, not the least rag, those parts which nature willingly conceals being exposd to view compleatly uncoverd'. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 63.

⁷⁴ Rob Cover points out that in western culture nakedness 'has been inseparable from sex and sexuality, and has hence been located adjacent to the indecent, the obscene and the immoral'. Cover, 'Naked Subject', 55.

conscious of their nakedness than if they had not been the children of Parents who eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge'.⁷⁶ Banks' biblical allusion highlights his belief that, like Adam and Eve, the Aborigines were 'naked but "not ashamed"', so their nakedness had nothing to do with sexual immorality.⁷⁷ Yet, not all of the explorers necessarily appreciated this axiom. William Bayly, Cook's astronomer on his third voyage, noted with an apparent tinge of disappointment that 'Tho all parts of the body is exposed, the [Tasmanian] Women refused to cohabit with our people on any Account'.⁷⁸ Their abstinence dashed the explorers' expectations, for Europeans had long assumed that black-skinned women were far from chaste, and in some early travellers' fantasies African women had been cast as the sexual aggressors of white men.⁷⁹ This stereotype was so entrenched that indigenous women's modesty was considered worthy of serious investigation.

Two sets of anthropological instructions had been prepared for the Baudin expedition: one authored by Georges Cuvier which focused on anatomical inquiries, and the other by Joseph-Marie de Gérando which considered social and cultural mores.⁸⁰ On the issue of modesty de Gérando asked 'Are there, in fact, any savage tribes so brutish that the women have absolutely no sense of modesty, that they completely lack inhibitions, and that they go before men without a blush?'.⁸¹ Ann McGrath, in her innovative history of cross-cultural gender relations at Port Jackson, explored the chivalric routines the Britons performed in order to discover the women's 'sooty blush'.⁸² Laura

⁷⁵ Cover, 'The Naked Subject', 55.

⁷⁶ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 99.

⁷⁷ Cover, 'Naked Subject', 55. He draws on Genesis 2:25 here.

⁷⁸ William Bayly, '29 January', cited in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume Three: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 2 Parts. (ed.) J. C. Beaglehole. Cambridge University Press, 1967. Part 1, 55 fn 2.

⁷⁹ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, New York and London, 1995, 22.

⁸⁰ Georges Cuvier, 'Note Instructive Sur Les Recherches A Faire Relativement Aux Différences Anatomiques Des Diverses Races D'Hommes' in Jean Copand and Jean Jamin (eds.), *Aux Origins de L'Anthropologie Française: Les Mémoires de la Société des Observateurs de l'Homme en l'an VIII*, Le Sycamore, Paris, 1978, 171-176. and Joseph-Marie de Gérando, *The Observation of Savage Peoples*, F. C. T. Moore (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969.

⁸¹ De Gérando, *Observation of Savage Peoples*, 89.

⁸² Ann McGrath, 'The White Man's Looking Glass: Aboriginal-Colonial Gender Relations at Port Jackson', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 99, Oct. 1990, 186-206. Sturma and

Runge contends that in the latter part of the eighteenth century feminine 'beauty was constructed as a mode of conduct, visibly perceived in the expression of modesty, cheerfulness, gentleness, and passivity',⁸³ best symbolised by a coquettish blush to the cheek.⁸⁴ The explorers soon realised that the blush was not the only indicator of modesty; for a woman's repose, even when naked, could still be demure. The Tasmanian women's decorum was evidently cause for much discussion amongst the Frenchmen for d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau states 'We all noticed that when the women sat down, one of their feet was always placed in front of their private parts, covering them completely'.⁸⁵ However, while women's modesty piqued the interest of the majority of the explorers and historians, indigenous men's nakedness and sense of shame also intrigued the explorers, though has yet to receive the same scholarly attention.

Continuing on from his discussion of the women's delicate repose, d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau also noted the position in which the men sat. 'Two or three men were seen to take up [the same] position for a moment, but at their meal they sat with their legs drawn up beneath them, perpendicular to their knees'.⁸⁶ Banks also noticed amongst the Endeavour River people that the men seemed to stand in a decorous manner, for they 'often, or almost allways with their hand or something they held in it hide [their genitals] in some measure at least, seemingly doing that as if by instinct'.⁸⁷ Though whether this was their typical behaviour, or a self-conscious reaction to the Europeans' intense scrutiny it is difficult to say. So the men were occasionally seen to be modest, but for the most part appeared completely unfazed by their nudity; moreover their state of undress allowed them to practice some unwittingly indecorous behaviours.

O'Brien also investigate the late eighteenth-century explorers' interactions with Aboriginal women and their representations of the women's modesty. Michael Sturma, 'The nubile savage', *History Today*, Vol. 45, No. 4, April 1995, 7-9, and Patty O'Brien, 'Divine Browns and the Mighty Whiteman: Exotic Primitivism and the Baudin Voyage to Tasmania, 1802', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 63, 1999, 13-21.

⁸³ Laura L. Runge, 'Beauty and Gallantry: A Model of Polite Conversation Revisited', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 25, Winter 2001, 44.

⁸⁴ Rosenthal, 'Visceral Culture', 574-8.

⁸⁵ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 283.

⁸⁶ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 283.

⁸⁷ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 63.

One habit which caught the eye of the explorers in Tasmania was the men's fondling of their genitals. David Samwell, the surgeon's mate on Cook's third voyage, noticed that 'All the time they stood still, they supported their Backs in some degree. by putting their left Arms behind them & laying hold of their right close to the Elbow, while the right Hand was constantly employed in pulling or playing with the Prepuce'.⁸⁸ This same habit was observed with much amusement by the Baudin expedition in 1802, and was even depicted by the artist Nicolas-Martin Petit in his drawing of a man standing, holding his spear in his right hand and his foreskin in his left.⁸⁹ The man has a serious expression, his mouth is slightly down-turned and his eyes are shadowed, suggesting that either his touch is absent-minded, or as Péron egocentrically suggests, he is disappointed with his endowment after seeing that of the Frenchmen.⁹⁰ Yet, in the water-colour reproduction the man's expression has changed, which completely alters the implication of the drawing.⁹¹

In the amended version his eyes look up and to the side, and he is now disconcertingly smiling, giving his demeanour a lascivious and even perhaps

⁸⁸ David Samwell, 'Some Account of A Voyage to South Sea's In 1776-1777-1776', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume Three: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 2 Parts, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Part II, 993.

⁸⁹ 'The men have a rather curious habit that greatly amused our sailors; it is to hold the end of their prepuce between their fingers nearly all the time. Consequently, it is very long'. Baudin. *Journal*, 344. Milius also observed the habit in Port Jackson: 'Quand ils causent ensemble ils sont dans l'habitude de se tenir le prépuce avec la main gauche et leurs armes toujours à la main droite'. Pierre Bernard Milius, *Recit du Voyage aux Terres Australes par Pierre Bernard Milius, Second su le Naturaliste dans l'expédition Baudin (1800-1804)*, Jacqueline Bonnemains and Pascale Hauguel, (eds.), Société havraise d'études diverses, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre, Le Havre, 1987, 48, and Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Portrait of an Aborigine standing', 25 x 15.5 cm, pencil and charcoal. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 20023.1, reproduced in Jacqueline Bonnemains, Elliott Forsyth, and Bernard Smith (eds), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804*, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Melbourne, 1988, 156.

⁹⁰ According to Péron apparently after seeing a young French man's erection, 'Several of them showed with a sort of scorn their soft and flaccid organs and shook them briefly with an expression of regret and desire which seemed to indicate that they did not experience it as often as we did'. This account was not published in the 1809 English translation, but was translated from the original and reproduced by Plomley, François Péron, *Voyage de découverte aux terre Australes, exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste, et la goelette le Casuarina, pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*; N.J.B. Plomley (trans.), in N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines. 1802*, Hobart, Blubberhead Press, 1983, 84.

deranged air. The only adornment on his naked skin is his cicatrisation marks, and even they have changed, as he now possesses a myriad of short longitudinal scars on his shoulders in addition to those on his torso and thigh detailed in the original. These amendments not only exoticise the man, but his facial expression now suggests that his action is sexually transgressive. The man's appearance exemplifies the insane onanist, as imagined in the eighteenth-century after the publication of the seminal text *Onania; or, the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution ...* (1710) and Samuel-Auguste-André-David Tissot's *Onanism, or a Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation* (1760) which, according to historian Vernon Rosario reconceptualised masturbation as a 'sexual practice potentially fatal to individuals and society alike'.⁹²

Unfortunately, it was this altered reproduction, and not the more ambiguous original which penetrated the public domain, as it was used to construct a composite image of a group of Tasmanians and published in the official journal.⁹³ Since it is Petit's only image of a completely nude Tasmanian man, it explicitly connects nakedness with sexual transgression when in all likelihood the Tasmanians' 'rather curious habit' of 'constantly' holding their foreskins was an innocent practice.⁹⁴ Anderson, who also observed this custom when he was at Adventure Bay, exclaimed that 'the men absolutely play with their Penis as a child would with any Bauble or a man twirl about the key of his Watch while conversing with you'.⁹⁵ For the surgeon this absent-minded practice suggested that the Tasmanian men might be childlike, a thesis supported by his observation of another of their habits.

⁹¹ Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Portrait of the same Aborigine', 38.5 x 21 cm. water-colour, gouache, ink and pencil on blue-tinted paper. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre. N° 20023.2, reproduced in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 157.

⁹² Vernon A. Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, 16-8. Tissot included many confessionals in his text by his patients whose addictions led to their horrible demise. In an illustration in a similar text a 'young female onanist' has been depicted and like Petit's Tasmanian her eyes also look up giving her a deranged air. Frontispiece to Dr. Rozier's *Of Secret Habits, or the Ills Produced by Onanism in Women*, 1830, reproduced as Figure 1 in Rosario, *Erotic Imagination*, 29.

⁹³ Nicolas-Martin Petit or Charles Lesueur, 'Group of Aborigines', 24 x 16 cm, pencil and ink. Group composed of the figures (20005, 20022, 20023, 20012) for plate XV. *Atlas*, signed by Lesueur. Reproduced in Bonnemains et al. *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 158. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 20024.1. reproduced in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 158.

⁹⁴ Baudin, *Journal*, 344.

⁹⁵ Anderson, 'A Journal', 3(II): 789.

The indigenes' nakedness, no doubt a simple fact of life for them and an artefact of their cultures and technologies, seemed to render them utterly available to any and all of the explorers' interests, even including how they relieved themselves. 'Their manner of making natural Evacuations', according to Anderson, 'also show that they are either destitute of all sense of shame or at least that they are under no restraint amongst each other, for the men never chang'd their posture on making water'.⁹⁶ Felix Emmanuel Hamelin, commander of the *Naturaliste*, Baudin's companion ship, observed the same practice while he was speaking to a man: 'he merely made a quarter turn to obey the need, and I think this was only on account of the wind blowing the urine on to his legs, because I saw a little boy, who was standing talking at my feet, urinate without turning away, as there was no wind'.⁹⁷ Ascertaining 'savage' people's 'sense of shame' was considered important in the eighteenth century because it addressed the emergent stadial theory which equated the hierarchy of civilisations with the differing ages of man and constructed so-called primitive people as childlike. For example Henry Homes, Lord Kames held that 'as, with respect to individuals, there is a progress from infancy to maturity; so there is a similar progress in every nation from its savage state to its maturity in arts and sciences'.⁹⁸ Discovering whether indigenous peoples possessed any sense of shame also impacted on contemporary disciplinary regimes implemented in Europe.

Norbert Elias in his influential study *The Civilising Process* argues that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries 'standards of shame, delicacy, and self-control' were imposed, and 'coarse practices' such as 'voiding in public' were vociferously discouraged. Further, it was thought that the civilising process was best begun with children, who were 'taught to discipline all their

⁹⁶ He adds, 'and would sometimes not move their legs out of the way but suffer the Urine to run down upon them'. Anderson, 'A Journal', 3(II): 788.

⁹⁷ Jacques-Felix-Emmanuel Hamelin, 'Papers of Jacques-Felix-Emmanuel Hamelin', N.J.B. Plomley (trans.), repr. in N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*. Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1983, 125.

⁹⁸ Lord Kames [Henry Home], *Sketches of the History of Man*, 3rd ed., 2 Vols., Edinburgh, 1779, Vol 2, p. 468-9 cited in Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*. Routledge, London and New York, 1999, 132.

appetites and desires'.⁹⁹ Perhaps Anderson believed that the Tasmanians simply needed to be indoctrinated with a 'sense of shame' and instructed on how to control their urges in a civil manner? Or to borrow Anne McClintock's thesis on the hegemonic uses of race to control the 'dangerous classes' in the 'urban metropolises',¹⁰⁰ perhaps these representations contributed to the indoctrination of westerners with regimes to control their bodies which set them apart from the primitive other? Irrespective of Anderson's motives, this account also highlights an important tenet: the Aborigines' nudity unleashed the explorers' baser curiosities. They seemed utterly unselfconscious about gazing at the Aboriginal men's nakedness, be it noticing their calloused knees or, more surprisingly, scrutinizing their penises.¹⁰¹

When Flinders' men first saw Aboriginal people on the north coast they evidently examined their genitals. Tragically, their first opportunity to examine a man was similar to that of Marion-Dufresne's men: the man had been shot by Flinders' men in response to the spearing of master's mate John Whitewood.¹⁰² Upon hearing this news, the master's mate, Denis Lacy, organised a search party to 'intercept the natives' who had been at the first meeting, and that dusk, a young seaman shot an Aboriginal man who had fled to his canoe. In his 'triumph' the mariner swam to the canoe to claim the vessel but accidentally capsized it, spilling his victim's body into the water. The next day, much to their surprise, they found the Aboriginal man's corpse on the beach where he had died after swimming to shore. Capitalising on this 'mischief being unfortunately done', Flinders sent his painter ashore to 'make a drawing', as well as the naturalist and surgeon to examine the body for 'anatomical purposes'. During

⁹⁹ Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, Vol. 1 of *The Civilising Process*, Edmund Jephcott, (trans.), Pantheon, New York, 1978, 100, cited in G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, 78-79.

¹⁰⁰ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 5. Michael Sturma makes a similar argument about the depiction of Pacific Islander women, claiming that the function of the representations was to control western women. Sturma, 'The nubile savage', 8.

¹⁰¹ Le Dez thought that the Tasmanians 'must often be on their knees, because the skin on them is very hard'. Le Dez, *Extrait*, 33.

¹⁰² Whitewood initiated the first meeting, but met his downfall when he mistakenly reached for a spear he thought was being offered to him and instead was speared through the breast. Flinders, *Voyage*, 197.

this examination they noticed with much surprise that the man ‘appeared to have been circumcised!’.¹⁰³

This discovery meant that Flinders and his men were on the look out for further examples. Later, after his landing at Caledon Bay Flinders described the ‘natives’ and exclaimed that ‘the most remarkable circumstance in their persons was, that the whole of them appeared to have undergone the Jewish and Mahometan rite of circumcision’.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, he did not elaborate on what significance he thought this apparent association to Judaism or Islam might have, but, given that he was an avowed Christian, his analogy must be pointed. According to Gary Taylor circumcision was seen as the mark of a ‘superstitious sect’ of Jews and Muslims, and ‘became for Christians the mark of a people who rejected God’.¹⁰⁵

Irrespective of his theological views, this observation illustrates that Flinders was not shy about gazing at the Aboriginal men’s penises, for he recites a list of cases where circumcision was either practiced or not: ‘The same thing was before noticed in a native of Isle Woodah, and in two at Wellesley’s Islands; ... No such practice was found on the South or East Coasts, nor was it observed in the natives of the islands in Torres Strait, who however, go naked as the Australians’.¹⁰⁶ Despite his carefully documented catalogue of the men’s genitals Flinders was unable to say much more about the practice, for he stated ‘with what view it may be done, or whence the custom was received, it is not in my power to state’.¹⁰⁷ Apart from giving the Europeans an opportunity to unabashedly inspect and describe the men’s ‘privities’, the Aborigines’ nakedness also gave rise to more philanthropic interests amongst the explorers.

¹⁰³ Flinders, *Voyage*, 198. Elkin notes that circumcision and subincision were widely practiced in the northern parts of Australia, and was an important rite in initiation and also in making Medicine Men. Circumcision was ‘the main symbolic act of ritual death’, and ‘subincision expresses sympathy and also ritual solidarity’. A.P. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree: Initiation and Sorcery in the World’s Oldest Tradition*, Inner Traditions, Rochester, 1994, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Flinders, *Voyage*, 212.

¹⁰⁵ Gary Taylor, *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood*, Routledge, New York, 2002, 164. Sander Gilman contends that this negative association is even older, as during the classical period Jewish men were able to undergo ‘foreskin reconstitution’ in order to ‘pass’ for as Roman. Sander L. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, 139.

¹⁰⁶ Flinders, *Voyage*, 212.

¹⁰⁷ Flinders, *Voyage*, 212.

Aboriginal people's nudity elicited some empathy from the European visitors as they pondered how the naked indigenes would cope in colder temperatures.¹⁰⁸ In an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the indigenes, Marion-Dufresne instructed two of his men to strip naked before meeting the Tasmanians. Perhaps it was this incident which prompted the Frenchmen's sympathy: they had first-hand experience of the cold. Le Dez posited that 'they must suffer very much during the winter, which must be long and hard'.¹⁰⁹ Though the *Mascarin* and the *Marquis de Castries* had visited during the summer, the Frenchmen still found it startlingly cold. Jean Roux noticed that 'Although they are situated in a higher latitude than our Europe, the cold is infinitely more unbearable. The actual season here is summer, but it is as cold as February in our climate'.¹¹⁰ Having determined that the Tasmanians went naked they assumed that their only method for 'fending off the cold' was 'by lighting fires',¹¹¹ and that this was why they 'are never without fire'.¹¹²

The Europeans were convinced that the islanders did not know to wear the kangaroo furs which they carried with them. Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, sub-lieutenant on d'Entrecasteaux's companion ship the *Espérance*, thought that the skins were used 'for the children to lie on and to sit on themselves rather than to serve as clothing', and whilst conceding that he had seen women 'spread [the fur] over their shoulders', he claimed that this was simply a convenient means of carrying it.¹¹³ Yet, Nicolas-Martin Petit made numerous illustrations of the Tasmanian men and women wearing what looks to

¹⁰⁸ In fact Tench pointedly warned that one could not infer from their nakedness that inured 'to the changes of the elements' as he had seen them 'shivering and huddling themselves up in heaps' as they waited 'until a fire can be kindled'. Tench, 1788, 52-3.

¹⁰⁹ Le Dez, *Extrait*, 34.

¹¹⁰ Jean Roux, 'Journal du voyage fait sur le vaisseau du Roi Le Mascarin, commandé par M. Marion Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de St Louis, Capitaine de Brulot: accompagné de la Flutte le Marquis de Castries pour fait le voyage de L'Isle de Taity ou de Cythère, en faisant la decouverte des Terres Australes, passant à la nouvelle hollande, à la nouvelle Zelande &c. &c.'. Archives Nationales, Series Marine, 4JJ/142/°18. Maryse Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 42.

¹¹¹ Le Dez, *Extrait*, 34.

¹¹² Roux, 'Journal', 42.

¹¹³ Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, 'Journal of La Motte Du Portail (*Espérance*)', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led*

be animal-skin cloaks, and Baudin mentioned one describing it as ‘the skin of a kangaroo, or some other animal’.¹¹⁴ Baudin’s expedition stayed in Tasmania from January through to June experiencing the summer and autumn, so perhaps these images were drawn in the cooler season.

In one of these works Petit depicts a seated man wearing a large wrap thrown over one shoulder and possibly tied in the front, as it drapes under the arm and down the back far enough to cover his buttocks as he sits. It appears to be made from animal fur worn inside out because though it looks to have a smooth surface, around the edges worn over the shoulder Petit has depicted the nap of the fur.¹¹⁵ It may be glib to say that the islanders obviously knew how to cope with the Tasmanian winter since they lived there, yet this thought did not necessarily penetrate the minds of the explorers who tried to introduce Aboriginal people to western clothing.

European apparel was used by various voyagers as gifts in order to placate Aboriginal people during first encounters or else as trade items, for instance one of Baudin’s ‘sailors exchanged his jacket for a kangaroo-skin’.¹¹⁶ In this instance the ‘native’ happily ‘tied it round his neck’, probably in the same way he had worn his original cloak, and then set off. The sailor noticed that the man had only travelled a short distance before he promptly took the jacket off and removed its buttons before abandoning it to the elements. Though the sailor profited from his exchange because he retrieved his jacket and kept the fur, he must have been bemused by the fact that the man was only interested in the buttons. Michael Sturma names these exchanges ‘make-overs’, as he does not consider that they were exclusively motivated by pragmatic reasons such as trade, but were ‘often a first step toward forming a relationship’.¹¹⁷ He also posits that ‘make-overs could involve an element of humour or jest at the

by *Bruny d’Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 300.

¹¹⁴ Baudin, *Journal*, 303.

¹¹⁵ Nicolas-Martin Petit or Charles Lesueur, ‘Aborigine seated in front of his fire’, 21.5 x 23 cm, water-colour, gouache and ink on blue-tinted paper. Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 20005, reproduced in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 139. There are 12 series of portraits of Tasmanians all wearing cloaks.

¹¹⁶ Baudin, *Journal*, 305.

other's expense', so clothing Aboriginal people in western attire may have also been a bit of a game for the Europeans.¹¹⁸

Sturma's thesis is borne out in the explorers' accounts. For instance, Baudin described an incident where his sailors were amused by their attempts to dress the Tasmanians. One man who had been 'dressed in long canvas breeches' was so encumbered by the unfamiliar garb that 'he had all the difficulty in the world to reach a tree about twenty-five paces from him'. The sailors no doubt laughed at the man's inelegant gait as he tried to negotiate the short distance before quickly getting 'rid of this uncomfortable attire', and was evidently so disturbed by the restrictive garb that he 'would not even take the buttons from it'.¹¹⁹ Tench also relayed a folly concerning clothes. In September 1790 he met a group of Aboriginal people on the north shore of the harbour, including Bennelong and his 'shy' wife Barangaroo. This was the first time Tench had met his former captive's spouse, and after some time had passed she was finally presented to the Englishmen, but not before being dressed in a petticoat by another woman, Abaroo. Tench found this 'prudery of the wilderness' vastly amusing, and together with Bennelong ridiculed her, and 'soon laughed her out of it' so she 'stood "armed cap-a-pee in nakedness"'.¹²⁰

But not all of the Britons were as quick to accept the Aborigines' reluctance to adopt western dress. The governor Arthur Phillip was the most committed to this enterprise as he saw it as a crucial means of civilising the 'savages', so hoped that they would quickly see the practical benefits of clothing. Observing some Aboriginal people during a rain shower, he noticed that they covered their heads with pieces of bark. At that moment he decided they would be thankful for garments, as he believed their failure to clothe themselves was merely an artefact of their ignorance and, as far as he could tell, not indicative of an ingrained aversion to clothing. Moreover, Phillip considered it his responsibility to educate the Aborigines on this matter, for it was

¹¹⁷ Michael Sturma, 'Dressing, Undressing, and Early European Contact in Australia and Tahiti', *Pacific Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1998, 92.

¹¹⁸ Sturma, 'Dressing, Undressing', 95.

¹¹⁹ Baudin, *Journal*, 305.

¹²⁰ Tench, *1788*, 142. Tench did not cite the source of this quote, but 'Cap-a-pee' appears to have been an English derivation of the French term *cap-à-pied* meaning 'head to foot'.

‘undeniably certain that to teach the shivering savage how to clothe his body, and to shelter himself completely from the cold and wet’ was a good deed.¹²¹

To this end the governor ordered a supply of ‘frocks and jackets to distribute among them, the design of the which [were] to be made long and loose, and to serve for either men or women’.¹²² Inga Clendinnen finds this decision indicative of Phillip’s ‘direct’ character, assuming that he thought this unusual but easy to wear style more suitable for the Aboriginal people.¹²³ But surely he was not oblivious to the connotations of such an outfit? In a society as codified as eighteenth-century Britain, clothing Aboriginal men in a unisex dress would have been emasculating, if not infantilizing. Phillippe Ariès illustrates the development of a distinct style of children’s clothing from the seventeenth century onwards, which gradually replaced the miniature adult attire previously worn by children. One of the new outfits he describes is reminiscent of that designed by the governor: a ‘long robe’ which ‘looks like a priest’s cassock’.¹²⁴

Irrespective of the particular connotations of this outfit, Phillip’s attempt to transform the appearance of the Aborigines had a paternalistic quality. Western dress was a conspicuous symbol of western civilisation, so by clothing Aboriginal people, Phillip was attempting to improve them through assimilation and, according to Clendinnen, to foster a sense of modesty and shame.¹²⁵ During Bennelong’s captivity Phillip had him clad in western clothing, despite the discomfort his woollen attire would have caused him in the hot Australian climate; and in order to indoctrinate in him a respect for the Sabbath, ‘on Sundays he [was] drest in nankeen’.¹²⁶ Bennelong’s outfits were not merely

¹²¹ Arthur Phillip, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time by Lord Auckland*. James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 141.

¹²² Phillip, *Voyage of Governor Phillip*, 138.

¹²³ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 30.

¹²⁴ Phillippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: a Social History of Family Life*, trans. by R. Baldick, Knopf, New York, 1962, 48-9.

¹²⁵ Sturma, ‘Dressing, Undressing’, 96, and Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 108.

¹²⁶ Bennelong was kidnapped towards the beginning of the Australian summer and escaped at the end of autumn. King, ‘Lieutenant King’s Journal’, 269. Nankeen was a pale yellowish cloth originally made at Nanking from a variety of cotton, but in the eighteenth century could also refer to a variety of unbleached silk.

indulgent gifts, as Phillip hoped that this transformation would be permanent: 'The governor's reason for making him wear the thick kersey [was] that he may be so sensible of the cold as not to be able to go without cloaths'.¹²⁷ To his consternation this plan failed, for, when Bennelong finally absconded, he first 'stripped himself of his very decent cloathing, left them behind, and walked off'.¹²⁸

Overall, in this early period western clothing clearly held little appeal for the Aborigines, as it was noted that 'they never come back wearing the clothes' they had been given.¹²⁹ Further, they must have been perplexed by the European's high regard for their own apparel. Péron threatened to kill a man who attempted to forcibly remove his jacket,¹³⁰ and Hamelin had little success in conveying the importance of colour-coordination to a confused Tasmanian. During one of his interviews he noticed that one of the men had 'his hands coated with red chalk' and that to his dismay the man had 'passed them several times over the leg of [his] trousers'. So Hamelin showed the man the dirty imprint left behind on his pants, and tried 'to make him understand that this did not match the blue' fabric. The man finally realised that the Frenchman was agitated by the stain so 'took a handful of ashes to throw on it' but was prevented just in time. Afterwards Hamelin shuddered at the realisation that if he 'had let him, [the man] would have removed the chalk by rubbing [his] leg with a wisp of grass and some ashes like scouring a frying pan'.¹³¹ No doubt the Aboriginal men's disregard for European clothing was partly because they much

¹²⁷ King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', 269. Clendinnen states that 'Phillip's very basic strategy was to develop a physical dependence on warmth'. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 108.

¹²⁸ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 139. It would become apparent that Bennelong associated clothing with the colony. The first time he was seen again was at the whale feast four months later, where he was naked and to some of the officers barely recognisable. He agreed to meet with the governor, but first put on a shirt to wear. Despite having worn one throughout his five-month long incarceration, he only managed to put it on after being assisted. Tench, *1788*, 135. Evidently clothing bore no lasting significance to him, and he only wore a shirt in recognition of its importance to Phillip. Though whether this was to indulge the governor's tastes or to suggest he was Phillip's equal is difficult to ascertain.

¹²⁹ La Motte du Portail imagined that they chose not to adopt the western attire because 'to do so would cramp them very much, in spite of the warmth they must gain in this way'. La Motte du Portail, 'Journal', 303.

¹³⁰ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 221. This episode will be discussed in chapter 4.

¹³¹ Hamelin, 'Papers', 123.

preferred their own methods of adorning their bodies: painting their skin with ochres, clay and charcoal and indelibly marking it with scars.

iv. adorning the skin

Throughout Australia the European explorers witnessed a range of Aboriginal bodily adornments such as the wearing of hair belts, fur cloaks, shell necklaces, bone ornaments for their hair, or piercing their noses, and blackening, oiling, painting and scarifying their skin. Their evaluations of these apparent decorations were mixed: often scornful, occasionally admiring, and at times moderated by a nascent cultural relativism which only appreciated these embellishments in the context of the Aborigines' apparently limited technology. Yet, even the most sympathetic voyagers still saw them as merely decorative, and did not comprehend their meaning, for they focussed on their materiality and did not consider the significance such adornments harboured within Aboriginal society. This tendency is evident in their representations of the Aboriginal men's painted and scarified skin.

As previously mentioned Aboriginal men and women applied various unguents such as fish oil or animal fat to their skin and blackened it with charcoal, but most of the explorers simply thought that 'their greasy skin', which was 'covered with every sort of dirt', was a sign that they 'never washed'.¹³² However, at least Collins recognised that there was a prophylactic purpose to this 'disgusting practice' since it 'guard[ed] against the effects of the air and of mosquitoes, and flies; some of which are large and bite with much severity'. Although recognising the rationale did not prevent him from complaining about the 'horrible stench'.¹³³ These applications drew the explorers' attention because they obscured the Aborigines' real colour which the Europeans were initially determined to discover. Yet the explorers seem comparatively indifferent to the designs that the Aboriginal men painted on their bodies with chalk and ochre.

¹³² Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 58-9.

¹³³ Collins, *Account*, 457.

This is not to say that they ignored the practice, but their discussions were merely descriptive and often lacklustre in tone; painting bodies did not spark the same interest as the aforementioned ‘disgusting’ or inexplicable practices. For example Samwell simply stated that ‘They daub their Faces, Hair, Beards, & their Bodies with red Earth’.¹³⁴ Baudin did not describe it in any more detail, but pointed out that the children, who were not painted, ‘were very attractive’ because, in his opinion, they were ‘not being disfigured by the red and black colouring used by the men and women for adornment’.¹³⁵ Matra at least described the designs, but only in a truncated fashion, stating ‘On their breasts were observed rude figures or men, darts, &c. done with a kind of white paint; which was also daubed irregularly on other parts of their bodies’.¹³⁶

Despite the uninspired tone Matra’s account is most telling, because in his descriptions of the designs he concludes his list with ‘&c.’. Remembering that Matra sailed on the *Endeavour*, and ostensibly witnessed a culture that had not been previously ‘discovered’, his disinclination to describe all of the ‘figures’ painted on their skin seems surprising. However, it indicates that to the eighteenth-century European eye painted skin was no longer an ethnographic novelty and not worthy of much discussion. Centuries of contact with the Americas and Africa meant that the western observer was familiar with this practice, and moreover the technique and materials used seemingly rendered it entirely accessible to outsiders. This attitude is even reflected in the scholarship, which largely explores permanent body modifications and marginalises ‘reversible body-marking’ such as ‘decoration, painting and masking’.¹³⁷ Of the explorers, only two undertook detailed examinations of the painted Aboriginal body - Collins and Hunter - and this was probably because only the First Fleet

¹³⁴ Samwell, ‘Some Account’, 3(II): 993.

¹³⁵ Baudin, *Journal*, 323.

¹³⁶ Matra, *Journal*, 58.

¹³⁷ Pasi Falk, ‘Written in the Flesh’, *Body and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 98. This marginalisation is evident in two fine historiographical articles which survey the extant scholarship on body modifications and ‘primitive’ body decoration which only mention body paint briefly, and an anthropological study which charts body art practices from around the world. Llewellyn Negrin, ‘Some thoughts on “primitive” body decoration’, *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2000, 331-5. and Enid Schildkrout, ‘Inscribing the Body’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33, 2004, 319-44, and Arnold Rubin, *Marks of Civilization: Artistic Transformations of the Human Body*, Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988.

officers had the opportunity to witness the painting conducted in preparation for rituals and ceremonies.

The Britons had noticed that the local Aboriginal people ‘often had a dance amongst themselves at night, on the lower part of Sydney-cove’, so one day in late 1790 they requested that they be allowed to watch.¹³⁸ The next evening the ‘governor and a considerable number attended’ but not before arming themselves as ‘experiences had convinced [them] that these people have a good deal of treachery in their disposition’. The English were even allowed to watch the dancers prepare, and noted that ‘much attention was paid to decorating themselves’. Hunter thought ‘they were all Adams and Eves, without even a figleaf but without their dignity’. He noticed that the women painted the men and he mocked the men for it, as ‘no fop preparing for an assembly was ever more desirous of making his person irresistibly beautiful’. His use of the term ‘beautiful’ rather than ‘handsome’ suggests that Hunter could only equate the ochres and clays with make-up, so considered it an effete undertaking. Wearing make-up or other cosmetic adornments was condemned by the more puritanical, for example by John Bulwer in his *Anthropometamorphosis. Men's transform'd or the ARTIFICIAL CHANGELING* (1653).¹³⁹ The men ‘were chiefly ornamented with streaks of white, done with pipe-clay, and in different forms, according to the taste of the man himself, or to that of the lady who adorned him’.¹⁴⁰ Evidently Hunter perceived it as little more than a decorative practice and did not ponder the significance of the designs, or any non-foppish reasons for the Aborigines painting themselves.¹⁴¹ Once they were ready

¹³⁸ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 210.

¹³⁹ The full title of this text continues *Historically Presented in the mad and cruel Gallantry, Foolish Bravery, Ridiculous Beauty, Filthy Fineness, and Loathesome Loveliness of most Nations, Fashioning and altering their Bodies from the mould intended by Nature with Vindication of the Regular Beauty and Honesty of Nature, and an Appendix of the Pedigree of the English Gallant*. This text was one of the first comparative catalogues of bodily adornment practices from around the known world. Falk, ‘Written in the Flesh’, 101 and Schildkrout, ‘Inscribing the Body’, 324.

¹⁴⁰ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 210.

¹⁴¹ Though Hunter does not recognise it, it can be assumed that the designs had a esoteric meaning. Anthropologist Howard Morphy notes that within Yolngu people’s body painting the designs are crucially important, for ‘they are the very designs that the ancestral beings had painted on their bodies, ... thus the use of paintings in ritual allows performers to participate in the spiritual dimension that was instrumental in shaping the world and which is fundamental to continuing existence’. Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, 48, cited in Max Charlesworth,

everyone walked down to the site where ‘a considerable number of people were assembled’ and ‘several fires lighted’, though the Britons first checked that ‘there were no armed lurkers among the bushes’, and then enjoyed the spectacle of the Aborigines’ ‘truly wild and savage’ dance.¹⁴²

Collins did not describe the particular ceremonies he witnessed, though it is most likely that he was in the audience with Hunter and the governor. His account is nonetheless interesting because he posits two modes to the practice amongst the Aboriginal people of Sydney: he suggested they used red clay ‘when preparing to fight’ and white ‘for the more peaceful amusements of dancing’.¹⁴³ This observation that paint was used mainly in ceremonies is supported by Pasi Falk’s claim that body painting is ‘used primarily in the “liminal” phases of ritual in which rules of the “normal state” are annulled and replaced by inverted ones’ such as the application of ‘warpaint’ before a battle.¹⁴⁴ Yet, if Collins’ theory on the significance of white paint was correct, it would certainly cast a new light on Sydney Parkinson’s famous illustration ‘Two of the Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat’, suggesting the unlikely scenario that the *Endeavour* had interrupted an indigenous dance.¹⁴⁵

This engraving, which is thought to represent the reaction of the Botany Bay men who attempted to repel Cook’s landing, depicts two men whose bodies are painted in white designs. The man in front has a diagonal cross-hatch pattern on his chest, two embellished parallel lines on his thighs, and two rings around his upper calves; the second man’s designs are mostly hidden by his partner standing in front.¹⁴⁶ Parkinson’s image suggests that white clay may have been instead used ‘when preparing to fight’. Collins’ theory was also contested by the fact that Hunter describes men ‘painted with red and white streaks all over the

‘Introduction’, in Max Charlesworth, Françoise Dussart and Howard Morphy (eds) *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings*, Ashgate, England, 2005, 9.

¹⁴² Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 211. The dance itself will be discussed in chapter six.

¹⁴³ Collins, *Account*, 457.

¹⁴⁴ Falk, ‘Written in the Flesh’, 98.

¹⁴⁵ T. Chambers after Sydney Parkinson, ‘Two of the Natives of New Holland, Advancing to Combat’, in Parkinson, *Journal*.

¹⁴⁶ Banks describes the two men as ‘painted with white, their faces seemingly only dusted with it, their bodies painted with broad strokes drawn over their breasts and backs resembling much a soldiers cross belts, and their legs and thighs also with broad garters or bracelets’. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 22.

face and body',¹⁴⁷ and the Port Jackson Painter produced illustrations of Aboriginal men painted in both red and white.¹⁴⁸ So while it is difficult to ascertain the symbolic meaning of white or red in Aboriginal culture, this example illustrates how speculative the explorers' theses were, and consequently how little they understood indigenous culture.

Collins also described the designs, stating that the 'fashion of these ornaments was left to each person's taste; and some, when decorated in their best manner looked perfectly horrible'. He continued on to say that 'Nothing could appear more terrible than a black and dismal face, with a large white circle drawn around each eye'. This evaluation is not unexpected, as Llewellyn Negrin argues that,

unlike Western make-up which is designed to enhance rather than to disguise the 'natural' features of the face, primitive face-painting contravenes the contours of the face, 'de-humanizing' the wearer by transforming him/her into something other than him/herself ... often achieved through the use of geometric forms and unnaturalistic colours which obscure the wearer's identity.¹⁴⁹

The fact that body paint could mask one's identity was something that the Europeans found particularly alarming. Baudin described his reaction to seeing Péron and Heirison return to the ship with their faces blackened, absurdly claiming that 'we no longer recognised them except by their clothes'.¹⁵⁰ While this was surely an exaggeration, it does illustrate the perceivably precarious nature of European identity which can be so easily lost.¹⁵¹ Collins was even disturbed by the disguising effect of the paint on the Aboriginal men's bodies, considering the 'waved lines marked down each arm, thigh and leg' and the 'lines drawn over each rib, presented to the beholder a truly spectre-like figure'.

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 57.

¹⁴⁸ See for instance the Port Jackson Painter's portrait of Colbee in which he is painted up after Balloderee's burial: he has red and white dots painted over his chest, shoulders, and upper arms, and red and white streaks across his forehead, temples and cheeks. Port Jackson Painter, 'Colebee. When a Moobee. After Balloderees Burial', ink, water-colour, 13 x 12.4 cm. Watling 67, Natural History Museum, London, reproduced as Plate 24 in Peter Emmett (ed.), *Fleeting Encounters: Pictures and Chronicles of the First Fleet*, Museum of Sydney, Sydney, 1995, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Negrin, 'Some thoughts', 333.

¹⁵⁰ Baudin, *Journal*, 324.

¹⁵¹ Samuel Otter explores this theme in his analysis of face tattooing in Melville's *Typee*. Samuel Otter, *Melville's Anatomies*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999, 40-2.

Hunter had a similar reaction, though thought that the designs made the men appear ‘exactly like so many moving skeletons’.¹⁵² The only aspect of the designs which Hunter appreciated were those which he recognised as appropriate to his own sensibility; he states that ‘some of them were painted with a little degree of taste, ... yet there were those who, at a small distance, appeared as if they were accoutred with cross-belts’.¹⁵³ Such a pattern conforms with *his* western imagining of a warrior, if not that of the Aborigines.

Finally, the British were also bemused by the technique used to apply the ochres. According to Collins ‘it must be observed, that when other liquid could not be readily procured, they moistened the clay with their own saliva’.¹⁵⁴ His preface suggests that the judge-advocate was disgusted by this method, or at least considered it an oddity. On the other hand Hunter seemed quite amused by it, for his description was more elaborate and marked with an ironic use of language. ‘This paint’, he said,

could not be applied without a little moisture, and the lady, in drawing those marks on the face, which were so essential a part of the decoration, I observed frequently to spit in the face of her friend, whom she was employed in adorning, in order to make the white clay mark stronger.¹⁵⁵

Hunter and Collins’ palpable distaste was somewhat hypocritical because the English were not averse to using saliva when necessary themselves, for, as mentioned earlier, Banks tried ‘spitting upon [his] finger and rubbing’ an Aboriginal man’s skin in order to clean it.¹⁵⁶ So in the European mind there was a sharp distinction between acceptable uses of saliva: it was tolerated for the purpose of cleaning, but clearly not in applying adornments. However, while the explorers seemed repulsed by the techniques used to apply the body paint, they were utterly perplexed by how the Aborigines managed to scarify their skin.

¹⁵² Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 57.

¹⁵³ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 57. This design must have been significant to the Eora people for twenty years earlier Banks described a similar design ‘resembling much a soldiers cross belts’ on the men who tried to prevent the *Endeavour* crew’s men from landing. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 22.

¹⁵⁴ Collins, *Account*, 458.

¹⁵⁵ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 211.

¹⁵⁶ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 98.

SKIN

Scarification was practiced by a number of indigenous societies throughout Australia and involved cutting a design in the skin and then manipulating the healing process, or cicatrisation, so that permanent keloid scars were formed. Generally scarification was used in initiation ceremonies to mark one's transition from childhood to adulthood occurring once the individual had acquired the requisite knowledge, and to delineate both their role and their relations to kin in society. Yet within various Aboriginal societies it took on particular significance. For example, beyond marking a rite of passage, Jennifer Biddle argues that scarification has a transformative effect, for within Warlpiri society the scarified body becomes the country, because the marks inscribed on the body reflect those imprinted on the landscape by the ancestral spirits during the Dreaming.¹⁵⁷ The materiality of the scars, then, is not their only significance, as meaning is made, at least partly, in the actual process of scarification itself. However, the explorers had no way of knowing this, and the majority were confounded by the practice, both by its purpose and method.

When Anderson witnessed scarified skin in Tasmania he could not even give a name to it, or speculate on its reason. He simply stated that 'Their arms and bodyes are cut in longitudinal lines of different lengths and directions which rise considerably above the surface of the skin, and make it difficult to guess the method they use to perform this operation'.¹⁵⁸ Le Dez was similarly ignorant about the practice, and only noted that the dead man they had inspected 'had several little scars or black marks in a crescent shape' on his chest.¹⁵⁹ While his compatriot de Montesson did not know the name of the practice, he recognised that the 'cuts on his chest [were] like those of the people of Mozambique', so at least recognised it.¹⁶⁰ Baudin assumed that the cicatrisation marks were tattoos,

¹⁵⁷ Jennifer Biddle, 'Inscribing Identity: Skin as country in the Central Desert', in Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (eds) *Thinking Through the Skin*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, 178-81.

¹⁵⁸ Anderson, 'A Journal', 3(II): 785.

¹⁵⁹ Le Dez, *Extrait*, 33.

¹⁶⁰ De Montesson, *Journal*, 47. Eighteenth-century Europeans were aware of cicatrisation marks but had a limited knowledge of the practice of scarification. Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encycloèpedie* describes the 'skin incisions', 'slashes' and 'marks on the skin' that various African peoples bore, but does not include any discussion of what it signified. Interestingly, of the peoples described who scarify their skin, the Fouéda who use a delicate design like a mosaic of flowers are considered the best workers, while those who use larger patterns are considered lazy, drunken, gluttonous and thieving. 'les Fouéda (principalement les femmes) se font cizeler

a practice recently 'discovered' in the Pacific Islands, but conceded that 'the way in which it is done it rather difficult to visualize, for the marks are raised on the surface of the skin'. After speculating that either cauterization or incisions would result in sunken as opposed to raised scars, Baudin decided to 'leav[e] it to [his] scientists to explain'.¹⁶¹

The more astute explorers guessed at the methods used, for example Banks speculated from 'their breadth and the convexity with which they had heald shewd plainly that they had been made by deep cuts of some blunt instrument, a shell perhaps or the edge of a broken stone'.¹⁶² Collins, by virtue of his interest in the more arcane aspects of Aboriginal culture, proposed the most likely scarification technique, claiming that the skin was 'cut with broken pieces of the shell they use at the end of the throwing stick. By keeping open these incisions, the flesh grows up between the sides of the wound, and after a time, skinning over, forms a large wale or seam'.¹⁶³ Collins recognised that the scarification happened when the recipient had reached a certain age, and that the boys he knew who 'underwent the operation' returned to the colony 'proud of the ornament' and 'despis[ing] the pain which they must have endured', suggesting that it was some kind of valiant ordeal. Yet, he still misguidedly considered scarification as merely decorative, and did not attribute any greater significance to the process.¹⁶⁴

The view that it was exclusively ornamental created much confusion, as some explorers were perturbed by the fact that Aboriginal people had rejected

le visage, & même tout le corps, formant des desseins de fleur, des mosaïques & des compartimens très réguliers. Il semble à les voir qu'on leur ait appliqué sur la peau une étoffe brune, travaillée en piquure de Marseille. Ces negres sont estimés les meilleurs pour le travail des habitations', and 'Les moins estimés de tous les negres sont les Bambaras: leur mal propreté, ainsi que plusieurs grandes balaffres qu'ils se font transversalement sur les joues depuis les nez jusqu'aux oreilles, les rendent hideux. Ils sont paresseux, ivrognes, gourmands & grands voleurs'. M. le Romain, 'Negres'. in Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers par une Société de Gens de lettres*, 17 Volumes, Chez Briasson et al., Paris, 1751-1772, Vol. 11, 81.

¹⁶¹ Baudin, *Journal*, 344. Though Baudin dismissed it Samwell proposes that the scars 'seem'd to have been made by fire'. Samwell, 'Some Account'. 3(11): 994.

¹⁶² Banks, *Australian Journey*, 100.

¹⁶³ Collins, *Account*, 457-8.

¹⁶⁴ Elkin describes various initiation ceremonies practiced throughout Australia and it is evident that some represent the ritual death of the initiand and connects them with the spiritual realm and their ancestor beings. Hence the process of scarification is just as important as the materiality of the cicatrisation marks. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men*.

European clothing and accessories yet appeared proud of their scarification. Tench petulantly noted that 'Notwithstanding the disregard they have invariably shown for all the finery we could deck them with, they [were] fond of adorning themselves with scars', adding that these only 'increase[d] their natural hideousness'. He claimed that it was 'hardly possible to see anything in human shape more ugly than one of these savages thus scarified'.¹⁶⁵ The marine's harsh criticism was obviously fuelled by his indignation over the perceived snubbing of the western accoutrements the Britons had offered them, but it might also have reflected the long held western belief that 'body markings were a sign of savagery'.¹⁶⁶

Jane Caplan and other scholars have traced the long history of tattooing, pinking, and branding in the west, demonstrating that within the Christian tradition these could be used punitively against prisoners, commercially for branding slaves, and as a sign of religious devotion for monks and pilgrims.¹⁶⁷ Yet by the sixteenth century this history had largely been forgotten, or else disavowed as an atavistic practice, exemplified by John White's imagining of the tattooed ancient Britons, the Picts, in his famous illustrations of a 'warrior' holding forth a severed head, or as a primitive custom, characterised by the depictions of the newly discovered inhabitants of the New World.¹⁶⁸ Inscribing the body came to be considered un-Christian, as, according to Enid Schildkrout the 'unmarked body' was 'a sign of God's work'.¹⁶⁹ Tattoos were banned by the

¹⁶⁵ Tench, 1788, 52.

¹⁶⁶ Enid Schildkrout, 'Inscribing the Body', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33, 2004, 324, [online], available at <<http://www.arjournals.annualreviews.org>> , accessed 20/6/06.

¹⁶⁷ Jane Caplan, 'Introduction', in Jane Caplan (ed.) *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History*, Reaktion Books, London, 2000, xi-xxiii.

¹⁶⁸ Juliet Fleming, 'The Renaissance Tattoo', in Jane Caplan (ed.) *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History*, Reaktion Books, London, 2000, 71-4, and Schildkrout, 'Inscribing the Body', 324. Alfred Gell posits that Cesare Lombroso, in his infamous nineteenth-century thesis on criminal behaviour, was the first to make tattooing the 'object of scientific speculation in the West' after he listed it as one of the characteristics of the 'atavistic being'. Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man according to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso, summarized by Gina Lobroso Ferrero, with an introduction by Cesare Lombroso*, New York, 1911, xiv-xv, cited in Alfred Gell, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, 12.

¹⁶⁹ Schildkrout, 'Inscribing the Body', 324. Pasi Falk similarly contends that 'Irreversibly moulding or marking of the body is often conceived of as a profanation of the image of God and decorating or painting as shameless articulation of the flesh'. Falk, 'Written in the Flesh', 100.

Church in 1787,¹⁷⁰ as Leviticus 19:28 commands that ‘You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you’.¹⁷¹

So Tench’s vitriolic response to scarification might have been an artefact of this belief that it contravened the integrity of the natural body and identified it as savage. He failed to see that there was any cultural significance to the practice, for he speculated that the reason behind it was purely frivolous, which contributed all the more to his ire. He facetiously noted that,

Unsatisfied, however, with natural beauty (like the people of all other countries) they strive by adscitious embellishments to heighten attraction, and often with little success. Hence the naked savage of New South Wales ... scarifies his body, the charms of which increase in proportion to the number and magnitude by which it is distinguished.¹⁷²

While others considered it a decorative practice, Tench was generally at odds with them in his criticism of body modifications because in the late eighteenth century the European navigators’ attitude towards skin modifications was becoming quite ambivalent. A case in point was the explorers’ reaction to the practice of tattooing.

Though the term ‘tattooing’ is now used in English to refer to the ‘making of indelible pigmented traces which are inside or underneath the skin’¹⁷³ in all cultures and times, the word actually originates from the eighteenth-century voyages of discovery to the Pacific. ‘Tattoo’ is derived from the Polynesian word *tatau*, which Nicholas Thomas eloquently defines as ‘the onomatopoeic name for the Polynesian body art that sailors were quite literally struck by. Ta-tau was, roughly, the sound made when a sharp instrument with a row of fine teeth was repeatedly hammered, puncturing the skin and marking it indelibly’.¹⁷⁴ Alfred Gell suggests that the explorers enthusiastically embraced tattooing ‘from the very first moment that European sailors and Polynesians came into contact with one another’, adapting a new significance for the

¹⁷⁰ Falk, ‘Written in the Flesh’, 100.

¹⁷¹ Fleming, ‘Renaissance Tattoo’, 78.

¹⁷² Tench, *1788*, 247-8.

¹⁷³ Gell, *Wrapping in Images*, 38. Note the French term *tatouage* has the same origins.

practice as an expression of the 'mariner's *habitus*'.¹⁷⁵ This is a valuable observation, but somewhat exaggerated as Samuel Otter has demonstrated that various navigators feared that tattooing would mask their identity, and only submitted as a means of ensconcing themselves in the local polity.¹⁷⁶

Harriet Guest most persuasively argues that the British response was ambivalent, noting that it was 'not quite the object of distaste or disapprobation'. Apart from the fact that Banks and Parkinson, as well as a host of later voyagers, were tattooed during the *Endeavour's* visit to Tahiti in 1769, she also reads William Hodges' portrait of an old Maori man with his face tattooed as a 'sentimental appropriation which perceives in tattoos the marks of private and individual character'.¹⁷⁷ This western reception of tattooing revealed the influence of the Enlightenment which encouraged the savants to secularize their knowledge, and broaden their outlook beyond the parameters set down in the gospel.¹⁷⁸

Yet, this appreciation was limited to tattooing, for the explorers who viewed scarification in the more positive light mistakenly referred to scarification as tattooing. Perhaps this was because the individuals concerned had not witnessed tattooed skin first hand so assumed that the marks borne by the Tasmanians were tattoos. Joseph Raoul noted that 'they are tattooed without regularity', whilst his colleague, botanist Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière considered a man to be 'tattooed with great symmetry' and as such 'presumed this savage to be a New Holland beau' whom the French 'all admired'.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook*. Penguin Books, London, 2004, 78.

¹⁷⁵ Gell, *Wrapping in Images*, 10. Greg Denning concurs, stating that 'A tattoo was the badge of a voyage to Polynesia in the eighteenth century' and cataloguing the various tattoos of the crewmates on the *Bounty*. Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, 35-6.

¹⁷⁶ Otter, *Melville's Anatomies*, 40-2.

¹⁷⁷ Harriet Guest, 'Curiously Marked: Tattooing and Gender Difference in Eighteenth-century British Perceptions of the South Pacific', in Caplan, *Written on the Body*, 97-101.

¹⁷⁸ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, 99.

¹⁷⁹ Raoul, 'Extracts', 306, and Labillardière. *Voyage in Search of La Perouse 1791-1794*, De Capo Press, New York, 1971, 319.

D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau even conceded that one of the 'heavily tattooed' Tasmanian youths was a 'very pretty child'.¹⁸⁰

Despite the fact that some of the French reactions to tattooing were more positive, it was still only seen as decorative, so did not merit serious scientific investigation. Consequently, cicatrisation marks appear as little more than a garnish for their ethnographic portraits, and are not represented as integral to the body, nor as an individuating practice. Virginal European eyes could only perceive scarification as homogenising: communities of Aborigines were a mass of 'much scarr'd' black bodies, and the people whose cicatrisation marks were described were generally only referred to as natives, savages or men, and not by their names. It is only in the portraits that we discover their names, yet these images are so inconsistent as to be unreliable.

The key example of this fluctuating portrayal of scarification was Nicolas-Martin Petit's illustration of the Port Jackson man Mousquéda which exists in multiple versions. There are four portraits of Mousquéda housed in the Collection Lesueur in Le Havre, France, two original drawings 20039.1 and 20039.2 and two engravings for the Atlases.¹⁸¹ These portraits are almost the same, in that the figure, background and aspect are all identical. The only variation is in the depiction of Mousquéda's body modifications, as each shows him with a different combination of nasal piercing, cicatrisation, and designs painted on his body. In 20039.1 Mousquéda is depicted with two columns of short latitudinal scars on his chest, and a long longitudinal scar on his upper arm, yet in 20039.2 he has no cicatrisation marks. In the engraving published in the journal he is in full regalia even though neither of the original drawings depict him with red body paint or a nasal piercing. This variation suggests that the Europeans were uninterested in scarification as a marker of Aboriginal identity and status, and only viewed it as an exotic embellishment for their illustrations.

¹⁸⁰ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's First Meeting', 285.

¹⁸¹ Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Bust of an Aborigine', 26 x 20 cm, pastel, charcoal, ink and pencil. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 20039.1, reproduced in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 174, and Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Bust of the same Aborigine', 30 x 24 cm, pastel, charcoal, ink and pencil. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 20039.2, reproduced in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 175.

However, within this sea of indifference were a few individuals who speculated on the significance of scarification. La Motte du Portail noticed that ‘young men and ... children’ did not possess cicatrisation marks, so realised that scarification was a rite of passage which they experienced at a particular age, a theory echoed by Baudin who observed that ‘Amongst these people, tattooing appears not to be done before a certain time, for the children, even those between twelve and fifteen carried no marks at all’.¹⁸² However, Banks gave the most detailed explanation on the meaning of scarification because he attempted to question the Aboriginal people he met at Endeavour River about it through the use of gestures. He determined that the ‘large scars in regular lines ... were the marks of their Lamentations for the deceased, in honour to those whose memory or to shew the excess of their grief they had in this manner wept in blood’. While later anthropological literature suggests that he had confused scarification with a mourning ritual of self-flagellation which many Aboriginal societies also practiced, his inquiry into cicatrisation marks beyond the materiality of the scars should be recognised.¹⁸³

v. conclusion

The explorers were explicitly interested in the Aboriginal men’s skin because of its colour, reflecting the new empirical interest in skin colour inspired by Enlightenment taxonomies. Some tried desperately to catalogue the various men’s exact colour, refuting their predecessors in an attempt to demonstrate the attentiveness of their eye, while others pragmatically employed the universal term black. Yet a close analysis of their descriptions of the Aboriginal men’s skin reveals a range of other interests, most concerning their nakedness, which left their bodies open to intense scrutiny, even parts which one would expect eighteenth-century probity would deem unmentionable. Their baser interests have largely been ignored by historians, perhaps from a concern about what the

¹⁸² La Motte du Portail, ‘Journal’, 300 and Baudin, *Journal*, 344.

¹⁸³ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 100. This is a good explanation, and indeed many Aboriginal people did scar themselves as a sign of mourning, but these instances would not have created the keloid scars Banks described, which Paul Brunton suggests are more likely initiation cicatrisations. For a brief discussion of the various types of scars see Robert Brain, *The Decorated Body*. Hutchinson and Co., London, 1979, 81. and Paul Brunton (ed.), *Australian Journey*, 100 fn 17.

explorers' representations may imply about Aboriginal society. Yet they are a valuable source for understanding eighteenth-century European sensibilities, changing notions of decorum, and how these new civilising regimes worked on the body.

The explorers' interest in the Aborigines' nakedness was also in some regard benevolent, as they sought to introduce them to the benefits of western apparel, but with little recognition of the cultural significance of clothing. Indeed, the explorers' primary focus on the natural aspects of the body meant that they largely ignored the ways in which skin was a cultural artefact, a site to inscribe identity and belonging with charcoals, ochres, clays and cicatrisation marks. During these first encounters the explorers were largely limited to documenting the visible aspects of the skin, as they were often unable to investigate any deeper meanings because they lacked a common tongue. Some intrepid explorers still groped for understanding, speculating on the significance of what they witnessed despite the limited evidence. This difficulty was a constant theme in their representations of the Aboriginal body and will be equally apparent in their discussions of the men's hair.

HAIR

i. hair

Descriptions of hair pepper the eighteenth-century explorers' discussions of Aboriginal men; its texture and colour, the styles in which it was sculpted, the various pomades and adornments used, and how it was groomed. It was not only the locks which garnered interest, the navigators also discussed the Aboriginal men's beards and the amount of body hair they possessed. This level of attention is curious and not one which has been reflected in the historiography. In fact art historian Angela Rosenthal observes that more 'often than not studies of eighteenth-century culture have overlooked or underemphasised the importance of hair'.¹ Until the last two decades those historians who adopted an interest in hair have focussed their attention on the eighteenth-century wig.²

The period is renowned for the coloured, curled, powdered, and perfumed wigs worn by the wealthy elite, and taken to the extreme by the flamboyant idlers known as Macaronis, whose cumbersome towers of hair prevented them from participating in any occupation other than preening.³ The wigs not only indicated one's status, however, they could also mask it. Lynn Festa suggests that differences in rank and 'natural endowment' could be erased

¹ Angela Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2004, 1

² Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years*, Peter Owen, London, 1971, 261-326, and Lynn Festa, 'Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2005, 47-90.

³ John Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair*, Drake Publishers Inc., New York, 1972, 40-43, and Corson, *Fashions in Hair*, 279.

by wearing a wig.⁴ In 1736 *Gentleman's Magazine* asked 'What imaginable Difference is there now between a Head adorned with the finest Tresses ... and a wither'd Pate almost bereft of Hair? A Bag or a Black Ribbon cover all alike. One Man's Hair is as like that of another as two Drops of Water'.⁵ While significant, this focus on wigs has obscured the multiple meanings of hair to the eighteenth-century individual. Not all eighteenth-century concerns were about status; natural hair could also reveal the individual's inner state of health. Hairdresser James Stewart posited that hair was connected to the body's humours, so warned anyone whose hair 'sheds, runs thick, lank or refuses to buckle' that they 'ought to be careful of falling into nervous disorders'.⁶ Hair belied one's psychological wellbeing as well as physical condition. Robert Houston notes that during this period hair was so thoroughly laboured over that to flout convention and leave it 'in a state of nature' was considered a sign of madness or at least eccentricity.⁷

Of greater significance to the eighteenth-century explorers, however, was what hair revealed about race. Although the Comte de Buffon observed that people who lived in the same area could have hair of diverse colours and textures, so 'any differences ... ought to be considered as merely accidental',⁸ he still believed that climate determined the nature of the hair. After examining the animal kingdom he claimed that 'heat and cold have great influence upon the colour of the hair of both men and other animals. In the northern regions, black hair is seldom or never seen'.⁹ However, it was through the influential work of the great taxonomer Carolus Linnaeus, whose categorisation of skin

⁴ Festa, 'Personal Effects', 59.

⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 6, 1736, 378 cited in Festa, 'Personal Effects', 59.

⁶ This was because 'the strength of the hair [is] connected with that of the fibres of the body'. James Stewart, *Plocacosmos, or the Whole Art of Hair Dressing*, London, 1782, 175 – 76 cited in Festa, 'Personal Effects', 64. Woodforde defines 'Buckles. from the French *boucles*. [as] hollow rolls of hair'. Woodforde, *Strange Story*, 22.

⁷ Robert Houston, 'The Face of Madness in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2003, 52.

⁸ He adds, 'In France, for example, there are men upon whose hair is as short and as crisped as that of a Negro'. Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Natural history, general and particular, by the Count de Buffon. Translated into English. Illustrated with three hundred and one copper-plates, and occasional notes and observations by the translator*, trans. William Smellie, 8 Vols. Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadel, London, 1781, Vol. 3, 136.

⁹ He continues 'And squirrels, hares, weasels, and several other animals, are white in the north, but brown or gray in more southern latitudes'. Buffon, *Natural History*, Vol. 3, 136.

colour was discussed in the previous chapter, that hair became one of the key indicators in tracing the relationships between the different varieties of man.

From the revised tenth edition onwards of his *Systema Naturae* Linnaeus included hair in his taxonomy, and by citing it as his second descriptor after skin colour elevated its significance to that of a racial phenotype. Linnaeus attributed the following types to the four races he constructed: the hair of *Homo americanus* was 'black, straight, thick', *Homo europaeus* 'yellow, brown, flowing', *Homo asiaticus* 'abundant black', and *Homo afer* 'black, frizzled'.¹⁰ This catalogue reduced the varieties of man to just four, determined by the known continents. It masked differences within each constructed 'race' (which previously had been widely recorded),¹¹ and exaggerated those between the races.

The purported empiricism of the taxonomic sciences gave credibility to long-held beliefs that physical characteristics such as hair type and skin colour reflected the inherent qualities of the races. For example in the late seventeenth century William Petty thought that Europeans and Africans 'in their Haire differs as much as a straight line differs from a Circle', and that this correlated to crucial differences in 'their Naturall Manners, & in the internall Qualities of their Minds'.¹² The conception that these diverse hair types were so marked and indicative of more intrinsic differences led some theorists to challenge the prevailing monogenist view that all peoples were descended from one common ancestor, and instead advocate polygenesis. For example, Jean Henri Samuel Formey, in his contribution to Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* alleged that the 'Negro' possessed 'wool instead of hair', and that this difference, in

¹⁰ Carolus Linnaeus (Carl von Linné), *Systema Naturae sive regna tria naturae, secundum classes, ordines, genera, species, cum characteribus, differentiis, synonymis, locis*. 12th edition, Laurentius Salvius. Stockholm, 1766-68, 28, cited in Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', 2.

¹¹ Byrd and Tharp detail various fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europeans' descriptions of a wide range of African hair styles and textures, for example Jean Barbot wrote that 'the Senegal blacks [have] their hair either curled or long and lank, and piled up on their head in the shape of a pointed hat'. A.D. Byrd and L.L. Tharp, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America*, St Martin's Press, New York, 2001, 8-9.

¹² William Petty, *The Petty Papers*, New York, 1927, 21, cited in Thomas DiPiero, 'Missing Links: Whiteness and the Color of Reason in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, Vol. 40, Iss. 2, Summer 1999, 164.

concert with others concerning skin and facial features, suggested that they ‘appear to constitute a new species of man’.¹³

However, hair has been ascribed other meanings which were not necessarily recognised in the eighteenth century, but are still useful for interrogating the explorers’ accounts. Recent anthropological and historical studies have revealed that hair attracts our attention because, according to Simon Coates it ‘surrounds the most expressive part of the body, the face, [so] any changes made to it are inherently visible and noticeable’, and anthropologist Patrick Olivelle claims that it is symbolically significant because it is the only part of the body that grows back, so can be repeatedly manipulated.¹⁴ This tendency means that hair will always be “‘worked upon” by human hands’, and unlike animal hair, never ‘exists in a natural state’, for even the seeming neglect of hair is a conscious treatment of it ‘by refusing to manipulate it at all’.¹⁵

The premise of this chapter is that hair is never just simply *there*,¹⁶ for indeed it is not just there in the explorers’ journals. Although some of their descriptions seem innocuous and purely descriptive, they are in fact imbued with meaning, reflecting the Europeans’ concerns with blackness, race, culture, civilisation, and hygiene. These interests are revealed in both their written descriptions and the numerous portraits depicting Aboriginal men’s hair, styles, and adornments which percolate the journals and atlases. In addition to these diverse descriptions the explorers also described interactions with Aboriginal

¹³ ‘Non – seulement leur couleur les distingue, mais ils different des autres hommes par tous les traits de leur visage, des nez larges & plats, de grosses levres, & de la laine au lieu de cheveux, paroissent constituer une nouvelle espece d’hommes’ (my emphasis). M. Formey, ‘Negre’, in Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers par une Société de Gens de lettres*. Chez Briasson et al. Paris. 1751-1772 [1765], 17 Volumes, Vol. 11, 76.

¹⁴ Simon Coates, ‘Scissors or Sword? The Symbolism of a Medieval Haircut’, *History Today*, May 1999, 8, and Patrick Olivelle, ‘Hair and society: social significance of hair in south Asian traditions’, in Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, 36.

¹⁵ Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1998, 42, Alf Hildebeitel, ‘Introduction: hair tropes’, in Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, 2, and Olivelle, ‘Hair and society’, 23.

¹⁶ Gananath Obeyesekere, when describing Patrick Olivelle’s work surmises that ‘Hair is just there as a product of our biological inheritance; but it can not be just left there. Hair must be dealt with’. Gananath Obeyesekere, ‘Foreword’, in Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (eds)

men which revolved around grooming practices, so this chapter will also explore the way in which hair was the basis for both amicable and ambivalent exchanges between natives and navigators.

ii. strait in some and curld in others

Taken simply at face value, the explorers' accounts of the physiological nature of Aboriginal men's hair seem to be merely bald description; the accounts are relatively short and illustrative, and extensive disquisitions are lacking. The first recorded description of Aboriginal people's hair was English buccaneer William Dampier's 1697 account of Aborigines from the north-west of Australia. In his account, Dampier invoked images of familiar non-European people, stating that 'Their hair is black, short and curled like that of the Negroes, and not long and lank like the common Indians'.¹⁷ His comparison of their hair to that of African 'Negroes' signposted a debate which was to dominate discussions of Aboriginal men's hair throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: whether or not Aboriginal people had 'woolly' hair.

This eighteenth-century definition and conceptualisation of African hair as 'wool' is interconnected with discourses on slavery which sought to dehumanise the African body in order to justify its abject treatment. The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that this derogatory term signifying 'the short, tightly-curved hair of Negroid peoples' was first used in a runaway slave advertisement in 1697. The explicit reference to animals was not accidental, as many slave owners used the term to 'differentiate it from the supposedly superior white variety' of hair, even when 'the appearance of their slaves' hair differed little from their own'.¹⁸ This type of hair was also ascribed sexual connotations, for according to Allan Peterkin, 'frizzy' hair was seen as 'demonic, licentious, and pubic'.¹⁹ Eventually, the term 'wool' escaped the shackles of slavery and was used by many esteemed eighteenth-century

Hair: its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, xii.

¹⁷ William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World: The Journal of an English Buccaneer*, (1697), Mark Beken (ed.), Hummingbird Press, London, 1998, 218.

¹⁸ White and White, *Stylin'*, 47 and Byrd and Tharp, *Hair Story*, 12.

philosophers and early ethnographers. With an ostensibly neutral empiricism Herder sought to explain the cause of 'woolly' hair, proposing that excessive heat induced the 'unnatural' generation of 'fine juices in the skin' which caused the hair to become 'wool'.²⁰ Like the Enlightenment philosophers' discussions of blackness, such investigations insinuated that this type was deviant. This presumption imbues the explorers' accounts of Aboriginal hair because many either simply determine, or painstakingly deny, that it is 'wool'.

The *Endeavour's* Joseph Banks weighed in on this debate when he asserted that 'the hair of their heads was bushy and thick but by no means wooley like that of a Negro'.²¹ Yet the expedition's artist Sydney Parkinson claimed that the same men's hair was 'black and frizzled', illustrating that it was just as difficult to achieve a consensus on their hair texture as their skin colour.²² However, the most interesting account from the *Endeavour* journals was Captain James Cook's claim that the Aboriginal people of Botany Bay did not have 'wooly frizzled hair, but black and lank much like ours'.²³ The intrepid captain was evidently aware of the negative connotations of so-called woolly hair as he was very reluctant to label it thus. Perhaps he suggested that their hair was 'lank' like Europeans' in order to repeal Dampier's view of Aborigines as the 'miserablest people' or else distance himself from the prejudiced discourse

¹⁹ Allan Peterkin. *One Thousand Beards: A Cultural History of Facial Hair*, Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, 2001. 101, cited in Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', 4.

²⁰ Johann Gottfried von Herder. 'Organisation of the Peoples of Africa', in *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, trans. T. Churchill, Bergman Publishers, London, 1800, repr. in Immanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge (Mass.), 1997, 76. This theory was flawed, however, as Buffon noticed that while the nation of 'Zanguebar' was in the 'Torrid Zone, [it was] not excessively hot' yet the 'hair of the natives is black and crisped like that of the Negroes'. He also notes that the Hottentots of South Africa, who live in a more temperate area, have 'short, black, frizzled, woolly hair'. Buffon, *Natural history*, Vol 3, 136 and 152.

²¹ Banks noticed that the hair of the Endeavour River Aborigines was 'strait in some and curld in others' and that 'it was the same consistence with our hair, by no means wooley or curld like that of the Negroes'. Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey*, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 24 and 63.

²² Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in his Majesty's Ship The Endeavour*, Stanfield Parkinson, London, 1773, Australiana Facsimile Editions A34, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1972, 134.

²³ James Cook. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume One: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1955, 312.

on 'wool'? This certainly seems the case when considering his attempts to describe the Tasmanians' hair.

Many of the explorers categorically described the islanders' hair as 'woolly', even Cook, but according to Beaglehole it was only reluctantly, after much debate with James King, Captain of the *Discovery*. The celebrated navigator wrote that the hair of the Adventure Bay Tasmanians 'was as woolly as any Native of Guinea'.²⁴ But his original editor John Douglas noted in a footnote that 'Captain Cook was very unwilling to allow that the hair of the natives ... was *woolly*, fancying that his people, who first observed this, had been deceived, from its being clotted with grease and red ochre'. King insisted that this was so, and urged Cook to inspect the hair of some boys and women, who did not apply indigenous pomades, and upon doing so, 'he owned himself satisfied that it was naturally *woolly*'.²⁵ William Anderson, Cook's surgeon, admitted that he thought that the 'frizzling disposition' of their hair might be a result of the 'grease mix'd with a red paint or ochre which they smear in great abundance over their heads', but upon examining a boy 'who appear'd never to have us'd any' he found it to be 'perfectly woolly'.²⁶

Cook's disparate accounts of the New Hollanders' and Tasmanians' hair seemed to cause some confusion even though they were from different voyages. First Fleet marine Watkin Tench mistakenly alleged that Cook proclaimed the Port Jackson Aborigines' hair to be woolly, and quickly refuted this imagined assertion. It is difficult to ascertain the source of his mistake: he either misattributed Parkinson's account to Cook or conflated Cook's Tasmanian

²⁴ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*. 4 Vols.. *Volume Three: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 2 Parts. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Part I. 52.

²⁵ John Douglas cited by Beaglehole in Cook, *Voyage*. 3(I): 52 fn 2.

²⁶ William Anderson, 'A Journal of a Voyage Made in His Majesty's Sloop *Resolution*', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Vol.3, Part II, 785. The surgeon's mate, William Ellis, concurred with this assessment, stating that the Tasmanians' hair was 'short and woolly'. William Ellis, *An authentic narrative of a voyage performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke, in His Majesty's Ships Resolution and Discovery, during the years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*. G. Robinson. Pater-noster Row; J. Sewell, Cornhill; and J. Debrett, Piccadilly, London, 1782. 17.

ethnography with that of New South Wales.²⁷ Shortly before his departure from Port Jackson Tench announced that 'Mr Cook seems inclined to believe the covering of their heads to be wool. But this is erroneous'. He unwittingly emulated Cook when he pointedly stated that 'It is certainly hair' which the Aborigines had, and moreover, 'when regularly combed [it] becomes soon nearly as flexible and docile as our own'.²⁸ Indeed, Bennelong, who had been incarcerated in the colony for five months and forced to adopt western clothing and ablutions, was uniquely described by Lieutenant Phillip Gidley King as having hair 'the same as the Asiatics, but very coarse and strong'.²⁹ Further, Collins noticed that when Bennelong returned to Port Jackson after his three-year visit to England in 1792 he 'was found to have very long black hair' because he had benefited from 'having some attention paid to his dress while in London'.³⁰

Tench's polemical position that Aborigines did in fact possess hair, especially noticeable when rehabilitated in a European manner, reveals the explorers' awareness of the derogatory implications of the term 'wool'. This is even suggested in some of the explorers' careful avoidance of the term, and their favouring of the words 'crispd' or 'frizzed' instead.³¹ Further, some of the Frenchmen from the expeditions led by Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne, Bruny

²⁷ Tench could not have read in the contemporary account that Cook considered the mainland Aborigines' hair 'woolly', because while John Hawkesworth cut the aforementioned description from his edition of Cook's journal; he does include the description of the Endeavour River Aborigines' hair which states 'their hair was black, but not woolly; it was short cropped, in some lank, and in others curled'. John Hawkesworth, *An Account of The Voyages Undertaken By The Order of His Present Majesty For Making Discoveries in The Southern Hemisphere, and Successively Performed By Commodore Byron, Captain Carteret, Captain Wallis, and Captain Cook, in the Dolphin, the Swallow, And the Endeavour*, 3 Vols., W. Strahan and T. Caddell, London, 1773, Vol. 3, 504 and 572.

²⁸ Watkin Tench, 1788: *Comprising 'A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay' and 'A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson'*, Tim Flannery (ed.), The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793], 244-245. Fellow First Fleet member, the surgeon Arthur Bowes Smyth similarly stated that their hair was 'not woolly, but short & curly'. Arthur Bowes Smyth, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon on Lady Penryth 1787-89*, Australian Documents Library, Sydney, 1979, 57.

²⁹ Phillip Gidley King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 269.

³⁰ David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Brian Fletcher (ed.), A.H & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1975, 459.

³¹ See Parkinson, *Journal*, 134, Banks, *Australian Journey*, 99, and Bowes Smyth, *Journal*, 57.

d'Entrecasteaux and Nicolas Baudin, used the term frizzy (*crépus*) rather than wool (*laineaux*) when describing the Tasmanians' hair. For example Baudin described it as 'frizzy, but not nearly as thick as the Africans'; commander of the *Marquis de Castries* Ambroise Bernard Marie Le Jar du Clesmeur said the Tasmanians have 'frizzled hair', whereas second-in-command of the *Mascarin* Julien Crozet compared their hair to the "'wool" of Kaffirs', and botanist Jacques de Labillardière simply states that the 'natives have woolly hair'.³² However, this was not a hard and fast rule: Pierre Bernard Milius of the *Naturaliste* combined both terms describing the Tasmanians' hair as 'wool' which is 'very frizzy at least'.³³

However, the explorers' interest in the Aborigines' natural hair went beyond their locks, for some also noticed their body hair, such as Marion-Dufresne's men even though their stay in Tasmania was very brief. Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau thought that 'The men's bodies are generally covered with short, fine reddish hair'.³⁴ His perception that it was reddish suggests that it was actually very fine, because he thinks it the same colour of their skin, but different to that on their heads. Perhaps he thought this a sign that they were unmanly? According to Kevin Parker in the eighteenth century coarse body hair was a 'harbinger of manhood', and 'downy, transparent hair' the mark of the

³² Nicolas Baudin, *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*. Christine Cornell (trans.). Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, 344, Ambroise Bernard Marie Le Jar du Clesmeur, *Account of a voyage in the South Seas and the Pacific beginning in 1771 ...*, Maryse Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*. St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 22, Julien Crozet, *Journal of the voyage of M. Marion Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand*. Edward Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*. St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 25, and Jacques de Labillardière. *An Account of a voyage in search of La Pérouse*, J. Debrett, London, 1800, in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 290.

³³ 'Comme ils les ont laineaux ou du moins très crépus'. Pierre Bernard Milius, *Recit du Voyage aux Terres Australes, par Pierre Bernard Milius, Second sur le "Naturaliste" dans l'expédition Baudin (1800-1804)*, transcribed by Jacqueline Bonnemains and Pascal Hauguel, Société Havraise d'Etudes Diverses, Le Havre, 1987, 31.

³⁴ Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting with the Natives, 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of*

'*impubere*'.³⁵ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's crewmate Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail also noticed their fine hair, commenting that 'the rest of the body is hardly hairy at all'. He clearly considered this a peculiarity for he pondered its cause: 'I do not know if the small amount of hair with the other parts are covered is the natural condition or whether it has been removed'.³⁶ Intriguingly, the notion that the men had been depilated suggests that the explorers may have considered their body hair a sign of their savagery as well as their effeminacy.

Eighteenth-century travellers and philosophers were struck by the Amerindian's hairlessness. Some considered it a savage custom; for instance Buffon claimed that the 'Savages of Brasil ... pull the hair out of ... every other part of their bodies, which gives them an uncommon and fierce aspect'.³⁷ While Louis-Alexandre Devérité attributed it to natural causes, and a 'sign of the feebleness of their constitution'.³⁸ Meanwhile Jacques-Vincent Delacroix considered it a sign of the 'simplicity of their nourishment' and a consequence of their 'defect of appetite and their indifference to sex'.³⁹ Irrespective of the cause the Tasmanian men's sparse body hair was considered odd and worthy of comment. Yet, it is difficult to ascertain whether the men were relatively hairless because an account by Baudin suggests otherwise.

On a rare visit ashore the post-captain, accompanied by captain Emmanuel Hamelin, the botanist Jean Baptiste Louis Claude Leschenault and the artist Nicolas Martin Petit, encountered three Tasmanian men.⁴⁰ After having met

the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793, Queen Victoria Museum. Launceston, 1993, 282.

³⁵ Kevin Parker, 'Winckelmann, Historical Difference, and the Problem of a Boy', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 540-1.

³⁶ Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, 'Journal of La Motte Du Portail (*Espérance*)', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 300.

³⁷ Buffon, *Natural History*, 3: 184.

³⁸ Louis-Alexandre Devérité, *Tableau de la Terre*. Abbeville. 1786, Vol. II, 233, cited in Cornelius J. Jaenen, "'Les Sauvages Américains': Persistence into the 18th Century of Traditional French Concepts and Constructs for Comprehending Amerindians', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1982, 51.

³⁹ Jacques-Vincent Delacroix, *Mémoires d'un Américain*, Paris, 1771, Vol. 1, 167 cited in Jaenen, "'Les Sauvages Américains'", 51.

⁴⁰ Baudin only mentions Hamelin, but Péron names the entire group. François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during*

them earlier in the morning the Frenchmen were happy to invite them over after first negotiating with them to abandon their arms. Soon the islanders were 'as familiar as if [they and the Frenchmen] were very much in the habit of being together', and happily rifled through the strangers' pockets. After examining their possessions the men then 'turned to [their] clothes' and 'in order to humour them in everything' the Frenchmen then displayed their chests 'about which they seemed very curious'. However, it seemed to be Leschenault's which 'gave rise to any excitement' for upon seeing it the Tasmanians gave 'great exclamations and even greater shouts of laughter'. Baudin assumed this to be because the doctor was 'hairless'.⁴¹ Though Baudin did not describe the men's body hair their reaction suggests that they found a smooth chest unusual so must have been relatively hirsute themselves. Indeed it appeared to the Frenchmen that the Tasmanians considered hairlessness to be a sign of femininity for sub-lieutenant Jacques de Saint Cricq noticed that 'When they saw a beardless one among us, they would immediately feel his breast and often they would even unbutton his waistcoat, to make certain that he was not a woman'.⁴²

There are far too few accounts to ascertain whether or not the New Holland men were hirsute, however. Banks claimed that they were when he observed that 'they seemd to have a redundancy of hair upon those parts of the body where it commonly grows'.⁴³ He must have found the amount of body hair striking because it was one of the first physical characteristics that Banks described, straight after their skin colour and even before describing the hair on their heads. Despite this, Collins suggested that the Port Jackson men could not have been unusually hairy for he pointedly singled out one extraordinary individual whom he referred to as 'old We-rahng'. He was considered

the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 185.

⁴¹ Baudin, *Journal*, 320.

⁴² Jacques de St Cricq, 'Papers of Jacques de St Cricq'. Archives Nationales, Marine Series 5JJ.48, N.J.B. Plomley (trans), Extract repr. in N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart, 1983, 141-4: 141. Worgan was struck by the same behaviour on his first meeting with Aborigines. George Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon*, Library Council of New South Wales in association with the Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1978, 6.

⁴³ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 24.

'remarkably hairy' and Collins asserted that 'in his whole manner seemed to have more of the brute and less of the human species about him than any of his countrymen'.⁴⁴ We-rahng's description must have been an exaggeration, for in addition to his excessive body hair he was attributed disproportionately long arms and an excessively prognathic face, so appears as a reversion to the *homines sylvestris*, as imagined from the medieval period until the sixteenth century.

This folkloric creature was 'usually pictured with a body covered in hair excepting only his face, knees and elbows'.⁴⁵ Contrary to the eighteenth-century representations early travellers to the Americas depicted the Amerindians as 'wildmen' so 'hairy, naked lustful, uncanny, unpredictable, uncultured ... [and] fulfilling his bestial instincts'.⁴⁶ Despite the ostensible rationalism of the Enlightenment it seems that folkloric imaginings seeped into the explorers' representations of Aboriginal men. These examples suggest that the explorers' descriptions of Aboriginal hair must be read in the context of contemporary European beliefs about race and gender, prejudices about so-called wool, and representations of mythic creatures. Yet it was not only the western discourses which mitigated the reliability of the explorers' representations of Aboriginal men's hair: they were also confounded by the indigenous hairdressing practices.

iii. tied in rolled knots and powdered with ochre

The wealth of illustrations depicting Aboriginal people accumulated during the late eighteenth century showcase a range of hairdressing and grooming practices. Petit and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's illustrations are particularly useful for demonstrating the techniques used: shaving, cropping, and the application of ochres and other materials to bind and adorn the hair. Recent anthropological studies have begun to examine the significance and meaning of hairdressing practices for particular societies, especially those in Africa and Asia. Unfortunately, the disparity between the range of styles documented in

⁴⁴ Collins, *Account*, 459.

⁴⁵ Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, 5.

⁴⁶ Jaenen, "'Les Sauvages Américains'", 51. see also Jahoda, *Images of Savages*, 15-6.

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these early illustrations and the relatively homogenous hairstyles depicted in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographs, suggests that assimilationist colonial practices deleteriously affected indigenous hairdressing, so it is difficult to excavate what the different hairstyles meant for Aboriginal people. Yet their significance is still open to historical interpretation, as Robert Houston states 'Wearing hair or a wig in a certain way may have had meaning for the wearer, but what historians observe is the reaction of others to a hairstyle'.⁴⁷ The explorers recorded a range of reactions, and while the most positive suggested amazement rather than appreciation, and many were negative, we find that their responses were largely born out of incomprehension and ignorance. Indigenous pomades and powders were perceived as mere dirt, and seemingly neglected styles as an artefact of their limited technology.

John Hunter simply considered that 'they seem to have no method of cleaning or combing, it is therefore filthy and matted'.⁴⁸ His presumption that Aboriginal hair was simply filthy was shared by many of the explorers. Hunter's lieutenant William Bradley, in his brief description of the Aboriginal men he encountered, made the curt assessment that their hair was 'clotted with dirt and vermin'.⁴⁹ His derogatory tone reflected contemporary attitudes to hygiene, as Europeans of differing classes had long relieved themselves of the pains of keeping their hair clean and louse-free by simply shaving their heads and adopting wigs instead.⁵⁰ Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the wearing of wigs was *de rigueur* for various reasons, including fashion and prestige, but also cleanliness. For example, Samuel Pepys, the famous diarist,

⁴⁷ Houston, 'The Face of Madness', 52.

⁴⁸ John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island with the Discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean since the publication of Phillip's Voyage, compiled from the official Papers; Including the Journals of Governors Phillip and King, and of Lieut. Ball; and the Voyages from the First Sailing of the Sirius in 1787 to the Return of that Ship's Company to England in 1792*, John Stockdale, London, 1793, Australiana Facsimile Editions No. 148, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1968, 41.

⁴⁹ William Bradley, *A Voyage to New South Wales: The Journal of Lieutenant William Bradley RN of HMS Sirius, 1786-1792*. Facsim. Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1969, 73.

⁵⁰ According to Woodforde even farmers and 'people with out-of-doors work' purchased wigs, typically the 'scratch bob' which was 'intended to resemble the wearer's own hair'. Woodforde, *Strange Story*, 22 and 37.

claimed that he had 'no stomach' for wigs, but only reluctantly wore them as 'the pains of keeping [his] hair clean [were] so great'.⁵¹

Alternatively, Hunter's tone may reveal his growing frustration with having his ethnographic endeavours circumvented. The apparent dirtiness of the Aborigines' hair prevented him from making a more conclusive physiological description of it other than saying it was 'bushy' and 'longer about their heads'.⁵² Buffon had noticed that Indigenous hair treatments had made it difficult to ascertain the physical nature of their hair and consequently determine their racial classification. He complained about the difficulty of determining whether the 'Hottentots' of southern Africa were 'Negroes' because of their hair, 'for they never either comb or wash it, but daily rub on their heads vast quantities of grease, soot, and dust, which makes their hair resemble a fleece of wool stuffed with dirt'.⁵³ Buffon was concerned that such unguents masked the texture of the hair and made it appear like wool which consequently undermined his thesis that they were 'not true Negroes, but blacks beginning to approach to whiteness'.⁵⁴

The explorers' descriptions of the Aborigines' apparently dirty hair also reveal the power dynamics at play in first encounters. Eleven months after the First Fleet's arrival the governor decided that he was 'Tired of this petty state of warfare and endless uncertainty' which existed between the British and Aborigines, so was determined to throw down the gauntlet. He resolved to 'captur[e] some of them' in order to either 'inflamm[e] them and escalate the conflict so he could decisively put an end to it, or to 'induce an intercourse'.⁵⁵ So on New Year's Eve his marines were despatched to 'seize and carry off some of the natives', though only successfully wrangled one man named Arabanoo who saw out the rest of his short life in the settlement. After being given a tour

⁵¹ Samuel Pepys. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. Robert Latham and William Matthews (eds), 11 Vols. University of California. Berkeley, 1970 – 84, Vol. 4, 130, cited in Festa, 'Personal Effects', 53.

⁵² Bradley, *Voyage to New South Wales*, 73.

⁵³ Buffon, *Natural history*, 3: 153.

⁵⁴ Buffon, *Natural history*, 3: 155-6.

⁵⁵ Tench, 1788, 94.

of Port Jackson and a meal at the governor's house, he was then coerced into having his hair cut and being shaved.⁵⁶

Unsurprisingly Arabanoo was alarmed when his captors approached him armed with scissors and a razor, for he refused to 'submit to these operations until he had seen them performed on another person'. Realising that they meant to cut his hair he supposedly 'readily acquiesced', and had it 'closely cut, his head combed and his beard shaved'. To what extent his acquiescence was volitional is questionable. He was at the mercy of his captors, and having already been disciplined for wiping his hands on one of the governor's chairs he would have had an inkling of how he was expected to behave.⁵⁷ Further, Arabanoo had little opportunity to resist as his want of English meant he could not articulate his refusal. He was not only coerced into submitting to being groomed, but also into modifying his own behaviour in accordance with British decorum.⁵⁸

Just as Tench expected, the prisoner's hair 'was filled with vermin' and he was repulsed to see that Arabanoo ate the lice, believing this was out of 'either revenge or pleasure' and not considering that this may have been an indigenous practice. The British promptly 'express[d] disgust and abhorrence' which made him leave 'it off'.⁵⁹ Tench's anticipation was no doubt shaped by the European misperception that the Aborigines were dirty and also by the aforementioned lengths eighteenth-century Europeans went to in order to prevent lice: shaving their hair and wearing wigs.⁶⁰ Yet, lice was not necessarily

⁵⁶ Tench, 1788, 95-7.

⁵⁷ For a similar example of cross-cultural coercion and indigenous performance see Shino Konishi, 'The tantalising cannibal: rationalising anthropophagy in the long eighteenth century', *Signatures*, special edition edited by Christa Knellwolf, Vol. 5, Summer 2002, [online]. Available at <http://www.ucc.ac.uk/signatures>, Ch. 3.8-3.9.

⁵⁸ Inga Clendinnen briefly describes this incident and states that 'Arabanoo must have gone through pure terror on that first day, and then for days to come'. Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, 97.

⁵⁹ Tench, 1788, 97. D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau also noticed that the Tasmanians ate their lice and drolly stated that 'if they consider them a delicacy, they have the means to satisfy themselves, for I noticed that there was an abundant supply on every head'. D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 282.

⁶⁰ The Aborigines actually applied oils and ochres to their skin and hair. John Woodforde claims that though 'hygiene had nothing to do with the start of the fashion [it was] certainly a factor in keeping it going', as the contemporary soaps did not adequately clean hair and could not remove 'clinging lice-nits'. Woodforde, *Strange Story*, 22.

an endemic problem for Aboriginal people, as Banks was very surprised to observe that ‘Dirty as these people are they seem to be intirely free from Lice’. European travellers had noticed this prevalence even ‘among the most cleanly Indians’ so Banks found it ‘remarkable’ that the Aborigines did not suffer because he thought ‘their hair was generally Matted and filthy enough’.⁶¹

The prevailing perception of filth meant that the explorers’ did not recognise that New Holland men deliberately manipulated their hair, so written descriptions of hairstyles are almost entirely absent. Even those which describe the look of the hair explicitly state that the Aborigines completely ignored their hair. For instance, Banks claims that ‘In all of them indeed it ... seemd as if seldom disturbd with the Combing even of their fingers, much less to have any oil or grease put into it’.⁶² It is naïve to assume that the Aboriginal men simply left their hair ‘natural’, for Gananath Obeyesekere asserts that hair is not a ‘natural symbol’ and ‘must be dealt with; thus everywhere there is culture control of hair’, even amongst those who ‘keep it in a culturally defined “natural” state’.⁶³

So it is short-sighted to assume, as Banks does, that the Aboriginal men deliberately refrained from dressing their hair. Though the descriptions of New Holland hairstyles are relatively rare, there are a few valuable accounts. Péron and Freycinet describe the hairstyles of some men from King Sound, and while not explicitly stated, there is a suggestion that the styles may have been determined by the individuals’ age. ‘The three eldest, who could have been forty to fifty years old’ had ‘naturally curly’ hair which was ‘trimmed all around’, whilst the two younger men, ‘judged to be from sixteen to eighteen years old’ had ‘their long hair ... gathered back into a knot’ and ‘powdered with ochre’.⁶⁴ In New South Wales Collins noticed that ‘natives who inhabit the south shore of Botany Bay’ would ‘divide the hair into small parcels, each of which they mat

⁶¹ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 100.

⁶² Banks, *Australian Journey*, 100.

⁶³ Obeyesekere summarising the work of Patrick Olivelle in Obeyesekere, ‘Foreword’, xii.

⁶⁴ François Péron and Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage of the Discovery to the Southern Lands: Book IV, Comprising Chapters XXII to XXXIV*, 2nd Ed., 1824, Christine Cornell (trans.), The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, 122-3.

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together with gum, and form them into lengths like the thrums of mop'.⁶⁵ While governor Arthur Phillip did not describe or perhaps even notice the men's hairstyles, he did at least observe that they adorned their hair with 'the teeth of dogs, and other animals, the claws of lobsters, and several small bones, which they fasten there by means of gum'. He even noticed that only men were thus adorned, suggesting that it may have had some gender specific significance.⁶⁶ However, it is the illustrations by the artists of the various expeditions which provide a valuable catalogue of the myriad ways in which Aboriginal men wore their hair, highlighting the great significance that it must have had in their culture.

The most common hairstyle depicted is simply short, even length, unadorned curly hair. Key examples of this style are the depicted in portraits by Baudin's artists, Lesueur and Petit, the First Fleet artist, known simply as the Port Jackson Painter, d'Entrecasteaux's artist Antoine Piron, and Cook's artists Parkinson and John Webber.⁶⁷ Again, it is difficult to assess how commonplace this hairstyle was because of the new influence of race theory on ethnographic portraiture. Bernard Smith claims that new conventions were established during this period, better 'suited to the new needs of the science of comparative anatomy. The older empirical distinctions that included an interest in dress and ornament [were] to be ignored'.⁶⁸ An example of this was Cuvier's edict to artists that they should depict all of the Aborigines with the same simple hairstyle in their drawings so that it would leave the shape of the skull visible, as he was more desirous of documenting their anatomical features than their

⁶⁵ Collins, *Account*, 457.

⁶⁶ Arthur Phillip, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time* by Lord Auckland, James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 76. Collins also describes the adornments they use in their hair but does not say whether it is exclusively men or women. In addition to those listed by Phillip he mentions 'the jaw-bones of large fish, human teeth, pieces of wood, feathers of birds, the tail of the dog, and certain bones taken out of the head of a fish, not unlike human teeth'. Collins, *Account*, 457.

⁶⁷ For examples see the many plates in Jacqueline Bonnemaïn, Elliot Forsyth and Bernard Smith (eds.), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, Peter Emmett, *Fleeting Encounters: Pictures and Chronicles of the First Fleet*, Museum of Sydney, Sydney, 1995, Jacques Julien Houtou de Labillardière, *Atlas pour servir à la relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse*. Paris 1800, and Parkinson, *Journal*, plate XXVII.

cultural practices.⁶⁹ Also, the apparent ubiquity of this short hairstyle calls into question how the First Fleet officers had so many occasions on which to cut the Aborigines' hair.⁷⁰

Another short style documented by Petit is of a man with short straight hair, including a fringe brushed forward onto his forehead.⁷¹ This illustration is unique because it is the only one depicting a man with straight hair in contrast to the majority of descriptions outlined above about the curliness or woolliness of Aboriginal hair. Even Petit's compatriots failed to include this example of straight hair in their written accounts. Consequently, P.G. Spillett suggests that it is a picture of a man from north-west Australia, another rarity for this period.⁷² Although the fact that he has straight hair does not necessarily prove this: for example Banks said that it 'was strait in some' of the New South Wales men he met.⁷³

There are also many illustrations of men with headbands adorning their hair. A portrait of Port Jackson man Mackabarang shows him with a headband perhaps made of small shells placed around his hair,⁷⁴ and Petit's illustration of another Port Jackson man depicts him with a more elaborate headband.⁷⁵ His is a woven band bound twice around his head, with one broad strip sitting on his forehead, masking his hairline, and another narrow strip sitting further back. These two bands create a narrow tuft of hair which peeks out in between the two bands, and another profusion of curls at the back of the head. A final image of a

⁶⁸ Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 1992, 187.

⁶⁹ 'représentât toutes ses têtes avec le même arrangement des cheveux, le plus simple possible'. Georges Cuvier, 'Note Instructive Sur Les Recherches A Faire Relativement Aux Différences Anatomiques Des Diverses Races D'Hommes' in Jean Copand and Jean Jamin (eds.), *Aux Origins de L'Anthropologie Française: Les Mémoires de la Société des Observateurs de l'Homme en l'an VIII*, Le Sycomore, Paris, 1978, 175.

⁷⁰ For other accounts of the British cutting and shaving the hair and beards of Aboriginal men see Tench, 1788, 135, 142, and 145.

⁷¹ Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'N^{elle} Hollande', 25.5 x 23 cm, pastel, charcoal, ink and pencil, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre, N° 20040, repr. in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 176.

⁷² Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 176.

⁷³ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 63. Also, as previously stated King described Bennelong's hair as 'Asiatic' which must mean straight and black. King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', 269.

⁷⁴ After Petit, *Mackabarang*, Australian National Maritime Museum, Louis Vuitton Fund.

⁷⁵ Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Portrait of an Aborigine, standing', 47 x 27 cm, pastel, charcoal, pencil and ink, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre, N° 20028, repr. in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters* p. 164.

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mainland Aboriginal man with long hair is Petit's illustration of Mororé. This man has long hair which has been pulled back off his face and bound with cloth into an elaborate arrangement.⁷⁶ Mororé also has a double binding headband, with the wider section sitting on his forehead, and another narrower band sitting closer to his crown. The length of his hair is pulled back into a ponytail bound completely in white cloth so that it protrudes horizontally from the back of his head.

Petit's portraits of Port Jackson Aborigines were drawn in 1802, approximately 14 years after the establishment of the settlement, and the use of cloth suggests that there was some trade or exchange of gifts between the Aborigines and Britons. While Baudin's men were in Port Jackson, Milius noticed that the men who had most contact with the British wore a bandeau around their forehead.⁷⁷ Yet, it does not seem as though this contact had any great influence on the indigenous hair styles. Shane White and Graham White found in their analysis of African slaves' hair that some men adapted Western hairstyles shortly after arriving in the New World. This adoption could have been the result of forced shaving, which was a common punishment in the period, but in some instances they found it was volitional. Some male slaves acquired wigs, and where this was not possible, some fashioned their own hair to look like European wigs.⁷⁸ Yet, this styling could obviously not pass for a wig because of the colour and texture of their hair, so White and White suggest that these men were '*bricoleurs*, drawing from both their African past and their American present to create a style that was new'.⁷⁹

So Mororé's hairstyle may be an example of cultural adaptation, a *mélange* of British material culture and indigenous style and meaning. Unfortunately, it is impossible to recover what this style said about his identity, as there are no other illustrations or accounts of other men with hair like

⁷⁶ Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Nouvelle-Hollande – Mororé', 31.5 x 24 cm, pastel, charcoal, ink and pencil, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre, N° 20038.2, repr. in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 173.

⁷⁷ 'Les sauvages qui ont le plus de fréquentation avec les anglais, portent à la tête un bandeau qui leur descend sur le front'. Milius, *Recit du Voyage*, 48.

⁷⁸ White and White, *Stylin'*, 50-51.

Mororé's, which begs the question of why is there no corresponding written description for this illustration? The three quarter angle of the drawing accentuates Mororé's bone structure and jaw line, suggesting that Petit was conforming to Cuvier's instruction, yet the hair style masks the shape of his head, especially the cranial vault which was of particular interest to comparative anatomists. This portrait fails to consistently privilege anatomical information over cultural. Apart from the consideration that this illustration was included in order to furnish exotica for the lay, as opposed to scientific, audiences of the published works, these elaborate hairstyles may have been represented in the illustrations and not the written accounts simply because the explorers found it too difficult to write apposite descriptions. Some were able to deploy the new physiological and racial lexis with comparative ease, yet in this period before the advent of social anthropology there was an absence of vocabulary to describe cultural manifestations such as hairstyles. It is only in extraordinary circumstances that the Europeans chose to write word pictures of the Aboriginal hairstyles: such as when they witnessed the highly unusual and exotic hairstyle worn by some of the Tasmanian men.

There is a striking similarity between the various descriptions of one of the Tasmanian hairstyles by the voyager led by Marion-Dufresne, Cook, d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin. Marion-Dufresne's men, like Cook himself, were very concise, only noting that their hair was 'anointed with red ointment'.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ They also add that these new hairstyles may have stood in for the rituals and body adornments that marked identity in Africa, and no longer seemed appropriate in America. White and White, *Stylin*: 51-2.

⁸⁰ Cook, *Voyages*, 3(1): 52. Le Dez noted that the man whom they had killed had his hair 'in the front ... powdered with a red dust'. Jean Roux thought it 'dyed with an ugly red colouring', and de Montesson described it as 'plastered with red paint'. Le Dez, *Extrait d'un nouveau voyage en australazie en 1772*, Archives Nationales, Paris. (Archives Privées), Fond Bougainville 155 AP 3 pièce 4, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 33. Jean Roux, 'Journal du voyage fait sur le vaisseau du Roi Le Mascarin, commandé par M. Marion Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de St Louis, Capitaine de Brulot: accompagné de la Flutte le Marquis de Castries pour fait le voyage de L'Isle de Taity ou de Cythère, en faisant la decouverte des Terres Australes, passant à la nouvelle hollande, à la nouvelle Zelande &c. &c.', Archives Nationales, Series Marine, 4JJ/142/°18, Maryse Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 42, and Paul Chevillard de Montesson, *Journal of the voyage of M. Marion Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries, Departed from the*

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William Ellis enlarged on this description slightly, noticing the texture as well as the colour: 'their hair (which was short and wooly) and beard were formed into small distinct lumps, with a mixture of reddish brown earth, and some kind of liquid, which appeared to be of an oily nature'. He thought that 'this mode of dressing their hair gave them an uncommon appearance'.⁸¹ Cook and Ellis' descriptions to some extent homogenise the Tasmanians, as Cook claims that 'most' men dress their hair in this manner, and Ellis merely states that it gives the wearer 'an uncommon appearance' without any elaboration. For instance, is it uncommon to the English or uncommon compared to the rest of the Aboriginal men?

Cook's crewmate Bayly sheds light on this matter, and notes that this hairstyle 'seemed to be part of their finery as many of them were not dressed in this manner'. The astronomer was clearly more intrigued with the Tasmanians' appearance because he gives a more exacting description of their hairstyle, noticing that the 'reddish clay' they used was formed 'into little round lumps about the bigness of a middle sized Pea', so that the 'head & beard of the men are hung with little balls on to the ends of the Hairs'.⁸² Bayly's account is an important counterpoint to the economic descriptions of Cook and others because it is not only more evocative, but also because he attempts to show how the Tasmanian men chose to express themselves sartorially, and that some demarcated themselves through their hairstyles. Yet, Bayly's journal was not published, so his description has only penetrated the public domain as a footnote in Beaglehole's edition of Cook's journal. It is mainly through the renowned, though taciturn Cook that we know anything of the Tasmanian's sartorial nature. Perhaps western notions of the apparent egalitarianism, or according to others, the paucity, of Aboriginal culture and society, is a consequence of these homogenising descriptions of Aboriginal cultural practices, as more elaborate alternative accounts were not published?

Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 47.

⁸¹ Ellis, *An authentic narrative*, 1: 17.

⁸² Bayly, 29 January, cited in Cook, *Voyage*, 3(1): 52, fn 3.

Another explorer who echoed Bayly's supposition that this particular hairstyle was considered special, is Baudin, who like Bayly is relatively unknown. Although he captained the expedition, it was his naturalists Peron and Freycinet who were recognised in print, as Baudin died before returning home. Baudin's sea-log was not published until 1974 in an English translation, and his historical journal was not published in French until 2000.⁸³ If these journals had not been rediscovered by historians in the twentieth century we would have even less idea of the cultural significance of this Tasmanian hairstyle. Baudin's more meticulous account notes that of the group he met, only one wore this style, making him 'remarkable for the elegance' of his appearance. At first sight Baudin thought the man wore a 'sort of wig-shaped cap'⁸⁴ possibly 'made of seaweed', so was determined to have a closer inspection. Possibly crowding around the man, the Frenchman 'realised that it was his own hair', which had been 'Divided into small strips about 1" long, and smoothed down with grease and reddish-brown dirt' forming 'a skull-cap over his head'. The voyagers were transfixed by this style, for they noticed that 'every movement he made caused it to shake in a different way'.⁸⁵ This exquisite account gives a particularly exacting description of the man's hairstyle, which corresponds to Petit's illustration of Ouriaga.⁸⁶

Baudin's account was also unusual because he did not rely on many analogies to describe their hair. For example, Julien Crozet described the Tasmanians' hair as 'tied in rolled knots and powdered with ochre'.⁸⁷ This nonchalant account resists exoticising the men's hair, suggesting that his eye assimilated their styling practices with the contemporary European fashions of wearing boucles, rolls, and queues, and dusting hair with powders and pomades. Other analogies to western styles could be more controversial. Baudin's

⁸³ See Baudin, *Journal*, and Nicolas Baudin. *Mon voyage aux Terres Australes: journal personnel du commandant Baudin*, Jacqueline Bonnemains (ed.). Imprimerie Nationale Editions, Paris, 2000.

⁸⁴ Milius also thought it looked like they wore a wig, or covered their heads with candlewicks. He states 'on dirait qu'ils portent une perruque ou qu'ils ont la tête couverte de grosses mèches de chandelles'. Milius, *Recit*, 31.

⁸⁵ Baudin, *Journal*, 303.

⁸⁶ Nicolas-Martin Petit, 'Terre de Djémen – Ouriaga', 31 x 25 cm, water-colour, gouache, ink and pencil on blue-tinted paper, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre, N° 20015.2, repr. in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 148.

⁸⁷ Crozet, *Journal*, 25.

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compatriot Ransonnet implicitly compared the Tasmanian men's style to that of European women, for he claimed that they have very beautiful hair formed into a chignon and powdered with red earth.⁸⁸ A chignon is a roll or coil of hair worn at the nape of the neck, and was an exclusively female hairstyle which came into fashion in the 1780s, so with this description Ransonnet seemed to feminise the men. Unfortunately, there are no corresponding portraits of men with this hairstyle in the accompanying *Atlas* so it is difficult to assess the appositeness of his descriptor.

Finally, the corpus of Tasmanian portraits portray a very different picture of Tasmanian hairstyles to these written descriptions. Cook and d'Entrecasteaux's artists Webber and Piron exclusively depicted Aboriginal men with short cropped curly hair, and Petit's portraits, other than the one mentioned above, depicted Tasmanian men with shaved heads or with a ring of hair around the head and the rest shaved. D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau described this style, comparing it to 'a skullcap, like that worn by catholic priests'.⁸⁹ So it is evident that the exoticness of the red-daubed hair contributed to the explorers waiving the general rule expounded by Cuvier, of ignoring the cultural manifestations in favour of the physical. This inconsistency and melding of cultural and racial imperatives also marked the explorers' descriptions of Aboriginal beards.

iv. more an encumbrance than a mark of dignity

The explorers observed that most of the Aboriginal men wore beards which some thought was simply left to grow naturally. In his general overview of New South Wales Banks stated that 'the beards of several were bushy and thick', and

⁸⁸ 'Ils avaient de très beaux cheveux dont ils avaient formé un beau chignon poudré en terre rouge avec laquelle les vieux s'étaient frottés le corps'. Joseph Ransonnet, 'lettre entrevue avec les aborigines of Port du Roi George', Cat no. 09030, Collection Lesueur du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Harve.

⁸⁹ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 282. He is describing the tonsure worn by clerics, which was said to be inspired by Gregory of Tour's uncle Nicetius, who, according to Simon Coates, 'was reputed to have been born with his hair growing in a circle on top of his head, revealing from birth that he was intended for the episcopate'. Coates, 'Scissors or Sword?', 12.

Bradley observed that the Port Jackson men's were 'very long and bushy'.⁹⁰ In Tasmania Anderson observed that the men wore 'their beards long'.⁹¹ However, as stated earlier, scholars have found that hair is never simply left natural, so this was a naïve belief contested by other accounts. Phillip asserted that 'the men keep their beards short' and even speculated on their methods: 'it is thought by scorching off the hair'.⁹² Further, in Tasmania the explorers' accounts differ markedly to the extent that it could not simply be differences in beard lengths which explain the inconsistencies. For example, Le Dez stated that 'they have very little beard' while d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau claimed 'they wear a fairly long beard' which he thought 'complement[ed] the face to perfection'.⁹³ Yet, irrespective of how the Aboriginal men groomed their beards the Europeans generally did not like facial hair, for d'Entrecasteaux's botanist Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière sneered that the Tasmanian 'suffer[ed] their beards to grow'.⁹⁴

The eighteenth century was an unusual period according to Richard Corson because it was 'one of the few times that almost total beardlessness was ever practiced' in Europe. Penelope Byrd claims that while wigs were in fashion 'beards and moustaches were virtually never seen'.⁹⁵ Houston noted that growing a beard was so unusual that it represented 'male eccentricity or madness and an affront to social convention'.⁹⁶ Yet even though most European men shaved off their facial hair, the ability to grow a luxuriant beard was considered essential in some quarters because it was a marker of both masculinity and race. Carolus Linnaeus exclaimed that 'God gave men beards

⁹⁰ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 99, and Bradley, *Voyage*, 73. See also Banks, *Australian Journey*, 24 and 29, Worgan, *Journal*, 6, Bowes Smyth, *Journal*, 58.

⁹¹ Anderson, 'Journal', 3(11): 785.

⁹² Phillip, *Voyage*, 76.

⁹³ Le Dez, *Extrait*, 33 and d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 282.

⁹⁴ Labillardière, *An Account*, 290.

⁹⁵ Corson, *Fashions in Hair*, 302, and Penelope Byrd, *The Male Image: Fashion in Britain 1300-1970*, B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1979, 159. See also Houston, 'Face of Madness', 52, and Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', 2-3.

⁹⁶ Houston, 'The Face of Madness', 52.

for ornaments and to distinguish them from women'.⁹⁷ Londa Schiebinger claims that eighteenth-century philosophers believed that 'excess bodily fluids' such as 'resorbed semen' caused the beard to grow, so proved one's manliness.⁹⁸ Further, this sign of masculinity was considered unique to European men. Charles White mused 'Where shall we find, unless in the European ... that majestic beard?', reflecting the eighteenth-century belief that the beard was also a racial sign.⁹⁹ So the beard represented a contradictory, yet somehow comprehended, complex of meanings in eighteenth-century Europe: abhorred by the fashionable because shaving represented civility and rationality, yet the physical ability to grow one esteemed due to its racial and gender significance.

Before Linnaeus came up with his revolutionary taxonomy Europeans had devised different categories of human populations which were less differentiated than his and his followers. For instance, Richard Bradley detailed the comparatively minor differences between Europeans and native Americans in *A Philosophical Account of the Works of Nature* (1721), which were solely based on their facial hair. He believed that of the purported 'five sorts of men' the most superior two were 'the white men, which are Europeans that have beards; and a sort of white man in America (as I am told) that only differ from us in having no beards'.¹⁰⁰ Yet according to others the indigenous Americans' subjugation at the hands of the seemingly superior and bearded Conquistadores was inexplicably linked to their supposedly natural smooth chins, and Schiebinger contends that to the eighteenth-century natural historians this 'proved that they belonged to a lower class of humans', and to some even 'a separate species'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Wilfrid Blunt, *The Compleat Naturalist: A Life of Linnaeus*, London, 1971, 157, cited in Londa Schiebinger, 'The Anatomy of Difference: Race and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Science', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1990, 391.

⁹⁸ Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1993, 125.

⁹⁹ Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man and in Different Animals and Vegetables*, C. Dilly, London, 1799, 134 cited in Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', 2.

¹⁰⁰ Elliott Horowitz, 'The New World and the Changing Face of Europe', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol 28, No. 4, 1997, 1182.

¹⁰¹ Schiebinger cites Richard McCausland, who reflected on these theories: 'It has been advanced by several travelers and historians that the Indians of America differed from the other

The fact that a beard could easily be manipulated through shaving meant that it was not a reliable racial indicator, a fact even recognised in the eighteenth century. Buffon and Blumenbach recognised that Amerindians deliberately plucked the hairs from their chins, and Schiebinger reveals that some contemporaries believed that 'if an Indian shaved from the time of his youth, he would develop the same lush beard of the European'.¹⁰² So if not considered a racial sign facial hair was at least seen to represent cultural deviancy, though this was only determined in accordance with western whims and fashions. Elliott Horowitz argues that depending on the particular non-Europeans, Europeans demarcated themselves from the Other by instituting a facial hair fashion that was the direct opposite. In fifteenth-century Spain, for example, the beard was closely associated with 'the Muslim and the Jew', so beardlessness became popular amongst Christians. This distinction was affirmed by the passing of laws which decreed 'Henceforward, Jews and Moors are not to shave their beards, ... but are to wear them long'.¹⁰³ However, once Europeans conquered the largely beardless Amerindians beards came back into fashion, as it was 'perceived, on some level, as a sign of strength, conquest and empire'.¹⁰⁴

In the eighteenth-century encounters with Aborigines the Europeans did not have to refashion their facial hair, as they found that they were already easily differentiated from the bearded indigenes. In some cases the beard appeared to exaggerate the ostensibly savage qualities of the Aboriginal men, especially their fierceness. This was apparent in Baudin's sailors' disturbing accounts of the Shark Bay men. Two parties of sailors had rowed ashore so that they could fish with the nets, but had a terrifying encounter with the local men. One group claimed that as they were trying to land, a group of 'extraordinarily big, strong men' suddenly ran down the beach and 'prevented their going ashore'. The 'hundred or more' men were described as 'giants', and apart from their prodigious size, the only physical characteristic that the terrified

males of the human species in the want of one very characteristic mark of the sex, to wit, that of a beard'. Richard McCausland, 'Particulars relative to the Nature and Customs of the Indians of North-America', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 76, 1786, 229-35, cited in Schiebinger, 'Anatomy of Difference', 391.

¹⁰² Schiebinger, 'Anatomy of Difference', 392.

¹⁰³ Horowitz, 'The New World', 1188.

¹⁰⁴ Horowitz, 'The New World', 1194.

Frenchmen noticed was their 'long, black beards [which] grew down to the middle of their chests'.¹⁰⁵ The second party of fishermen returned with a similar story, and were equally terrified, so Baudin's naturalists decided to go ashore and investigate the matter, but upon meeting a group of Aboriginal men found that they were 'of ordinary height – even small'.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, these apparently cool, calm, and collected men of science, unlike the terrified sailors, did not even find their beards worth mentioning.

There were similar reports on the fierce and beardless native Americans, which suggests that it was not so much the beard itself, rather that facial hair signalled difference between the indigene and European. Consequently, by masking this dissimilarity, in the Aborigines' case by shaving their beards, the Europeans imagined that they could also erase their fierceness, and inspire some kind of accord. It was only the First Fleet men, with their great number and closer contact with Aboriginal people who were able to attempt this, and did so within their first month of arriving.

One day 'some young gentlemen belonging to the *Sirius*' met an old man and noticed that he 'had a beard of considerable length'.¹⁰⁷ In an attempt to establish cordial relations with the man and follow Phillip's plan to 'win their affections', the Britons offered to 'rid him of [it], if he pleased' by 'Stroking their chins and showing him the smoothness of them'. After a while the old man finally understood their 'signal' and acquiesced. Using a penknife and 'making use of the best substitute for lather he could find' the marines shaved the man. Perhaps out of novelty or a genuine preference the old man appeared to appreciate his new smooth chin, for a few days later he 'paddling alongside the *Sirius* in his canoe and pointing to his beard' which was taken for him wanting to be shaved again. The sailors invited the man aboard, but he refused so 'a barber was sent down into the boat alongside the canoe' and 'leaning over the gunnel' shaved the man. The man's apparent delight suggested to Tench that the beard held no special significance in Aboriginal society and was more 'an

¹⁰⁵ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 134, and Baudin, *Journal*, 506. This episode will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

¹⁰⁶ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 146.

¹⁰⁷ Tench, 1788, 59.

encumbrance than a mark of dignity'; it was simply a burdensome artefact of their limited barbering technology. More significantly, Tench hoped that the intimate act of shaving and being shaved, in which the recipient's vulnerability attests his trust,¹⁰⁸ was also a culturally transcendent means of bonding, heralding the 'dawning of cordiality' between the two groups.¹⁰⁹

This was not an isolated case during the formative years of the Port Jackson settlement, as Phillip noted that 'several of them ... seemed to take great delight in being shaved'.¹¹⁰ Even when the men 'had no beard', as was the case with the young man Immeerawanyee they still eagerly participated in this western grooming ritual by 'being combed and having his hair clipped'.¹¹¹ However, it seems unlikely that the Britons were happy to play barber to the Aboriginal men simply to maintain friendly relations, and there must have been other benefits. For instance, as a strategic initiative, the First Fleeters would have immediately been able to identify which men chose to consort with them, and who were still potentially hostile, just by the appearance of their facial hair. As with their attempts to clothe the Aborigines, grooming would have contributed to their attempts to assimilate and civilise Aboriginal men.

Just like Arabanoo, Bennelong had been shaved and groomed when he was kidnapped by the British. He stayed in the settlement for five months during which he became, at least to British eyes, integrated into western life by wearing clothes and learning English. Yet, when the opportunity arose he absconded from the colony and returned to his people where, much to the distress of the Europeans, he reverted to his own customs, by abandoning his western garb and allowing his beard to grow. Indeed when they saw him again he was 'so far disfigured by a long beard' that it was 'not without difficulty' that the officers

¹⁰⁸ This close relationship is exemplified by a popular story related by Corson about a brave young apprentice barber, who takes up a challenge that no experienced barber would: to shave a 'richly carbuncled' officer despite the threat of death if 'one drop of blood be drawn'. His reason for taking such a risk is was that 'if I had drawn blood, I should have seen it first, and I would have cut your throat'. From this example Corson states that 'In view of the opportunities afforded to barbers for misusing their tools, it is very much to their credit that they evidently maintained the confidence of most of their patrons'. Corson, *Fashions in Hair*, 261.

¹⁰⁹ Tench, 1788, 60.

¹¹⁰ Phillip, *Voyage*, 76.

¹¹¹ Tench, 1788, 145.

'recognised their old acquaintance'.¹¹² Upon realising that he could meet with the governor, Bennelong then asked for a razor so that he could shave his beard. The British assumed that 'the length of his beard seemed to annoy him much', so he was given a pair of scissors and he diligently demonstrated that 'he had not forgotten how to use such an instrument' as he clipped away at his hair. But perhaps his beard was not an encumbrance? Rather, Bennelong may have learnt that this was what his former captors expected of him following his long incarceration. Historians have noted that in many different cultures and times removing hair and shaving was a form of control and punishment.¹¹³ However, the Britons must have expressed their admiration for his newly smooth chin, which possibly led Bennelong to infer that acquiescing to shaving his beard was a means of manipulating the settlers who evidently wanted their potential envoy back.

One week later Bennelong again met some of the officers and behaved in a far more arrogant fashion. In front of his family and friends, some of whom were 'timorous and unwilling to approach' Bennelong received a fine present of a 'hatchet and a fish'¹¹⁴ and then 'called loudly for' some 'bread and beef' which he offered to his nervous associates, of whom only two 'tasted the beef'. Once finished he then 'made a motion to be shaved' and to the 'great admiration of his countrymen' he was promptly shaved by the barber who was present.¹¹⁵ Bennelong appears to be having fun at the Englishmen's expense, tantalising their desires to assimilate him and have him return to the colony. His arrogant performance markedly contrasts with his earlier encounter where he repeatedly asked for a razor, and had to trim his own hair which suggests a great change in his attitude, perhaps triggered by his intervening meeting with Phillip. At this meeting the British made it clear to Bennelong that they wanted him to 'visit Sydney'. They attempted to persuade Abaroo to endeavour to convince

¹¹² Tench, *1788*, 135.

¹¹³ While most historians focus on the shaving of the head, though to a lesser extent, surely the shaving of the beard in a society where it is almost universal for men to wear one, would perform a similar function. The most famous account of shaving is in the story of Samson, Judges, 16:17. See also Byrd and Tharp, *Hair Story*, 10-11. Woodforde, *Strange Story*, 3, White and White, *Stylin'*, 40.

¹¹⁴ Tench, *1788*, 141.

¹¹⁵ Tench, *1788*, 142.

Bennelong's wife Barangaroo to come to the settlement, as a 'means of drawing her husband and others thither'.¹¹⁶

Yet, Bennelong's acts of bravery may also have been intended to show off in front of his countrymen, for they 'laughed and exclaimed' when he was shaved, but would not 'consent to undergo it' only 'suffer[ing] their beards to be clipped with a pair of scissors'.¹¹⁷ Clendinnen contends that Bennelong was a complex character whose actions were intended to manipulate the Britons and Aborigines alike. In a similar incident she proposes that Bennelong's performance was to aid his own 'rapidly evolving political project', to be 'the crucial hinge-man between the white men and the local tribes'.¹¹⁸ Irrespective of whether or not he had an ultimate goal in mind, these examples of shaving indicate that Bennelong was clearly putting on a performance for both the British and Aboriginal men. Such spectacles illustrate that the Western investment of meaning in facial hair and shaving came to be recognised by the indigenes, and how even such a seemingly mundane practice could be imbued with the ambivalences of the colonial encounter.

v. conclusion

While hair may essentially be 'a mere lifeless extension' of the body, it has been imbued with meaning in various cultures and civilisations. In eighteenth-century Europe it was ascribed political, cultural, hygienic, and, most significantly, racial importance. And clearly it was highly regarded within Aboriginal societies as demonstrated by the wide range of hairstyles and adornments used. Yet, there is more to hair than just its materiality and fashion. The explorers' accounts reveal that the intimacies connected to maintaining the hair, through various cleaning, grooming, and styling practices, formed a basis for the Europeans' interactions with the Aboriginal men. These close connections could be coercive and border on punitive, as in the cases of the Aboriginal men captured and forcefully bathed, clipped and shaved, or they could invoke amity as the novelty of being temporarily transformed (for hair has the luxury of

¹¹⁶ Tench, 1788, 143.

¹¹⁷ Tench, 1788, 142.

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always growing back) could elicit amusement and awe. How hair is fashioned can also be a crucial sign of masculinity, especially in the case of beards and other facial hair. The explorers accounts of beards are particularly interesting because they provide a window onto a different era, in which beards were paradoxically understood as both a sign of racial superiority and cultural inferiority. This highlights the curiosity and complexity of the period, and inspires even greater wonder about how the seemingly polar-opposite European and Aboriginal men were able to find some brief moments of amiable camaraderie over some soap and a razor. But the beard also draws our gaze to another body part which still attracts great attention – the face.

¹¹⁸ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 119.

FACE

i. envisaging the face in the eighteenth-century

The European explorers' descriptions of Aboriginal men's faces were in some regards uniform, yet at the same time very idiosyncratic. Structurally the accounts were similar: the face was atomised into an inventory of different features (the forehead, eyes, nose, teeth, and mouth) and each evaluated separately. However, in contrast to their representations of other parts of the Aboriginal male body, their aesthetic appraisals of the face were wide ranging. For example, John Hunter considered the men 'very good looking'; Nicolas Baudin merely found their aspect contained 'nothing unpleasant'; while Jean Roux thought they had 'a very ugly and mean face'.¹ The diversity of these assessments indicate just how subjective aesthetic judgements could be, a fact well recognised in the eighteenth century. David Hume held that 'Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates

¹ John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island with the Discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean since the publication of Phillip's Voyage, compiled from the official Papers; Including the Journals of Governors Phillip and King, and of Lieut. Ball; and the Voyages from the First Sailing of the Sirius in 1787 to the Return of that Ship's Company to England in 1792*, John Stockdale, London, 1793, *Australiana Facsimile Editions* No. 148, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1968, 168; Nicolas Baudin, *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*, Christine Cornell (trans.), Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, 303, and Jean Roux, 'Journal du voyage fait sur le vaisseau du Roi Le Mascarin, commandé par M. Marion Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de St Louis, Capitaine de Brulot: accompagné de la Flutte le Marquis de Castries pour fait le voyage de L'Isle de Taity ou de Cythère, en faisant la decouverte des Terres Australes, passant à la nouvelle hollande, à la nouvelle Zelande &c. &c.', Archives Nationales, Series Marine, 4JJ/142/°18, Maryse Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 42.

them',² but eighteenth-century musings on the face were not just about beauty. The face was considered the body's most nuanced sign, signifying a range of attributes which would otherwise lie hidden.

Even now the face is a powerful symbol; in our language the word is commonly used metaphorically, for instance, to be 'two faced' or duplicitous, to 'look someone in the face' or be confronting, and to 'lose face' or be humiliated. But despite this modern signification Mary Cowling claims that contemporary attitudes towards the face have become 'more perfunctory and far less reverent' than they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³ The most obvious reason for this was pointed out by Robert Houston, who observed that in the eighteenth century the only part of the male body not obscured by modest clothing was the face, especially amongst the elite who even masked their hands with gloves.⁴ Further, the face was the most obvious conduit between the inner being and the outside world, as it housed all of the body's organs of sense, allowing us to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.⁵ Consequently, the face was fetishised, and according to literary scholar Deidre Lynch 'understood less as a natural fact, and more as a prototypical sign, an exemplary sort of reading matter'.⁶

A range of qualities were believed to be read in the face: the Earl of Shaftesbury supposed that through it life experiences could be comprehended, as though etched onto a *tabula rasa*;⁷ British satirist William Hogarth claimed

² David Hume, 'On the Standard of Taste', in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, containing Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary, to which are added Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. 2 Vols., J. Jones, London, 1822, Vol. 1, 214.

³ Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, 7.

⁴ Robert Houston, 'The Face of Madness in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2003, 51.

⁵ Houston, 'The Face of Madness', 51. Houston lists touch as the only exception but this is not the case, as argued by nineteenth-century physiognomist Paolo Mantegazza who claimed that 'This universal cult of the human face is fully justified. In it we find assembled ... all the organs of the five senses'. Paolo Mantegazza, *Physiognomy and Expression*, 1890, 24, cited in Cowling, *Artist as Anthropologist*, 7.

⁶ Deidre Lynch, 'Overloaded Portraits: The Excesses of Character and Countenance', in Veronica Kelly and Dorothea E. Von Mücke (eds.), *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994, 114 and 116.

⁷ Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 6th ed., London, 1711, Vol. 1, 142, cited in Roy Porter, 'Making Faces: Physiognomy and Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England', *Études Anglaises*, No. 4, 1985, 394.

that the 'face [was] an index of the mind';⁸ and a century earlier Sir Thomas Browne held that the visage carried the 'motto of our soules, wherein he that cannot read A.B.C. may read our natures'.⁹ The French in turn studied the face for signs of the passions: in the seventeenth-century Charles Le Brun, who influenced portrait artists well into the eighteenth-century, claimed that 'the face is the Part of the Body where the Passions more particularly discover themselves'.¹⁰

The eighteenth-century figure most commonly associated with the study of the face was the Swiss physiognomist and pastor Johann Caspar Lavater, who described the human face as 'the most beautiful, eloquent of all languages'.¹¹ Lavater's four volume opus *Essays on Physiognomy* (1775) popularised the antique practice of physiognomy as a new 'science'.¹² *Essays* comprised galleries of portraits and profiles with accompanying notes on the moral, spiritual and intellectual qualities inhered in each immutable feature. Lavater, in contrast to the pathognomists who studied facial expressions, focussed on fixed characteristics believing that they revealed one's underlying character, and not just fleeting emotions, yet most of his followers conflated the two practices.¹³ Janet McMaster notes that his 'method is much more intuitive than empirical',¹⁴ and as such his findings were highly subjective, for they were largely determined by his notions of beauty: he believed there to be a correlation

⁸ William Hogarth, 'Of the Face', *The Analysis of Beauty*, 136, cited in Janet McMaster, *Reading the Body in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2004, 50.

⁹ Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, 138, cited in McMaster, *Reading the Body*, 42.

¹⁰ Charles Lebrun (sic), *A Method to Learn to Design the Passions*, John Williams (trans.), 1734, cited in McMaster, *Reading the Body*, 73.

¹¹ J.C. Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, Leipzig and Winterthur, 1775-1778, Vol. 1, 96, cited in David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century*, Reaktion Books, London, 2002, 94.

¹² McMaster, *Reading the Body*, 52 and Porter, 'Making Faces', 394.

¹³ Judith Wechsler, 'Lavater, Stereotype, and Prejudice', in Ellis Shookman (ed.), *The Faces of Physiognomy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Johann Caspar Lavater*, Camden House, Columbia S.C., 1993, 110; F. Price, 'Imagining Faces: The Later Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Heroine and the Legible, Universal Language of Physiognomy', *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1983, 3; and Christopher J. Lukasik, 'The Face of the Public', *Early American Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2004, 426.

¹⁴ McMaster, *Reading the Body*, 56.

between attractiveness and virtue, for ‘the better the morals, the more beautiful; the worse the morals, the uglier’.¹⁵

This new science was just one of a number of popular disciplines which read the face and skull, but Lavater and the Dutch anatomist Petrus Camper ostensibly lent these practices an empirical respectability, which eventually led to more insidious interests in the face. Facial features became another fixed sign of race, as David Bindman has shown in his study of race and aesthetics. He argues that early travellers observed certain facial features amongst individuals of different peoples (and extended these to represent the entire group). Subjective evaluations of their beauty formed the basis by which these peoples and their societies could then be ranked. Lavaterian thinking then implied that the aesthetic ranking of different races ostensibly reflected the people’s position on a scale of civilisation.¹⁶

The eighteenth-century face then was a highly nuanced symbol that could be interpreted in myriad ways. For the explorers, reading the Aboriginal face was a vital consideration, especially given the absence of a common language or culture. This body part was one of the only means by which they knew to gauge the Aboriginal nature and passions; measure their morality and intellect; or determine their racial affinities. This chapter concerns what the eighteenth-century German satirist Georg Lichtenberg coined the ‘most entertaining surface on earth’¹⁷: it will examine the explorers’ representations of the aesthetics of the Aboriginal male face, including its various adornments, and their reading of the indigenous countenance. Finally, the notion of the face as the house of all the senses will be explored, including the Europeans’ own disquiet at finding themselves the subject of indigenous perceptions.

¹⁵ Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente*, Vol. 1, 63, cited in Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, 95.

¹⁶ Bindman uses Johann Reinhold Forster’s evaluations of Pacific Island peoples as an example of this link between hierarchies of civilisation and aesthetic appraisals. Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, 12, 19-20, and 126-7.

¹⁷ McMaster, *Reading the Body*, 53.

ii. tolerably good features

William Dampier was the first explorer to describe the Aboriginal visage in any detail. He presented their faces as an amalgam of unsightly features: 'round Foreheads, and Great Brows', 'bottle-noses, pretty full lips, and wide mouths', resulting in them possessing a 'very unpleasing aspect, having no one graceful feature in their faces'.¹⁸ Dampier's description of New Holland and its people was well-known to the later explorers, most notably James Cook, whose observations differed from his English predecessor's: just as he found the 'Eastern side [of the continent] is not that barren and Miserable Country that Dampier and others have described the western side to be',¹⁹ he thought the Aboriginal 'features are far from being disagreeable'.²⁰

Perhaps, as testimony to his opposition to Dampier, Cook determinedly refrained from describing their facial features, the only exception being that he noted that they paint their faces with ochre. His crewmates, however, attempted to describe the men's looks, though their descriptions suffered from the poverty of their experience and vocabularies, resulting in slim and incomplete accounts. For example, James Matra only stated that 'Many of them had flat noses, [and] thick lips'; Sydney Parkinson described their teeth as 'regular, well-set [and] large'; and Joseph Banks perceived in their eyes a certain spirit.²¹ Yet, despite 'lively' eyes and 'far from disagreeable' features, Parkinson observed in the

¹⁸ William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World: The Journal of a Buccaneer*. Mark Becken (ed.), Hummingbird Press, London, 1998 [1697], 218-9.

¹⁹ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., Volume One: *The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1955, 397.

²⁰ Cook, *Journals*, 1: 395. He repeats the same phrase in his description of Botany Bay in particular, on p. 358.

²¹ James Matra, *A Journal of a Voyage round the World. In His Majesty's Ship Endeavour. In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, and 1771: Undertaken in Pursuit of Natural Knowledge, at the Desire of the ROYAL SOCIETY*, T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, London, 1771, reproduced in Alan Frost, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire*. Miegunyah Press, Carlton Vic., 1995, 63; Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in his Majesty's Ship The Endeavour*, Stanfield Parkinson, London, 1773. Australian Facsimiles Editions A34. Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1972, 147 and 134; Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey*, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 63.

men who attempted to prevent their landing at Botany Bay a ‘countenance [which] bespoke displeasure’.²²

The *Endeavour* accounts are notable for their brevity: compared to those of later expeditions their descriptions are broad to the point of being meaningless, comprising only a single adjective for each feature. This illustrates the *Endeavour* crew’s relative lack of ethnographic skill and terminology, and more importantly, interest, for their primary aim was to document the landscape and natural resources, not people. Since their ethnography was conducted only when chance permitted, most of their physical descriptions pertain to the inhabitants at Endeavour River where the expedition happened to stay the longest in order to carry out ship repairs.²³ However, in the intervening seven years between visits to Australian shores, Cook furthered his exploration and came into contact with more indigenous peoples in the Pacific and North America. This experience marginally enhanced his ethnographic skills, as evident by his subsequent accounts of the Tasmanian men’s faces.

In 1777, on his third voyage of discovery Cook’s crew spent five days at Adventure Bay where their encounters with the Aboriginal men were less openly hostile than they had been at Botany Bay and Endeavour River. Cook, a comparatively conservative man, employed the same phrase to describe the Tasmanian men’s features as he had the New Hollanders’, stating that they are ‘far from disagreeable’. However, in spite of his taciturn nature he did elaborate in his descriptors: the men’s eyes were ‘pretty good’ and their teeth ‘tolerable even but very dirty’.²⁴ Many of his crew emulated his efficient use of language,

²² Parkinson, *Journal of a Voyage*, 147 and 134.

²³ This was the only locale at which Cook mentions physically examining the Aboriginal people, in order to ascertain if they had all pierced their noses. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Cook, *Journals*, 1:358.

²⁴ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*. 4 Vols., *Volume Three: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 2 Parts. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Part 1, 52. His crewmates William Ellis and Samwell, however, use single adjectives, for examples ‘their noses flat, lips thick, forehead low’, and ‘wide mouths’, ‘bad teeth’, to describe the men’s features. William Ellis, *An authentic narrative of a voyage performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke, in His Majesty’s Ships Resolution and Discovery, during the years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*, G. Robinson, Pater-noster Row; J. Sewell, Cornhill; and J. Debrett, Piccadilly, London, 1782, Vol. 1, 19, and David Samwell, ‘Some Account of A Voyage to South Sea’s In 1776-1777-1776’, in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*:

except for his experienced naturalist and surgeon William Anderson,²⁵ who qualified his descriptions to give a more exact account of their features. The best illustration of this concerned descriptions of the Tasmanians' noses. While his assistant William Ellis bluntly stated that their noses were 'flat', Anderson took pains to point out that 'their noses though broad or full are not flat'.²⁶ This comment on the nose not only reflects his more nuanced vocabulary, but also his familiarity with the contemporary discourses on human variation.

European travellers had for a long time noted the African 'Negroes'' flat nose, a feature considered so ugly as to be unnatural; a deliberate manipulation in order to satisfy an exotic conception of beauty. The Comte de Buffon, in his 'Of the Varieties of the Human Species' gave a good example of the European conjecture about the origins of this ostensibly deformed nose: 'Father Terte affirms, that, if most of the Negroes are flat nosed, it is owing to a general practice of the mothers, who depress the noses of their children as soon as they come into the world'.²⁷ Buffon disagreed with this theory however, and stated that except for the Senagalese who possess a fine nose, flat noses were 'bestowed on them by nature; These, instead of deformities, are regarded as marks of beauty'.²⁸ Though Buffon held that the 'unfortunate Negroes [were] endowed with excellent hearts and possess the seeds of every human virtue',²⁹ it is evident that he, like the numerous European travellers he cited, found the flat nose, if not a deformity, at least unsightly. Lavater on the other hand, considered it an ugly 'bodily defect or blemish', reflecting one's immorality, which would

The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967. Vol. 3, Part II, 993.

²⁵ Anderson accompanied Cook on his second voyage and would have benefited from the tutelage of the accomplished German naturalist Johann Reinhold Forster and his son George, as well as the Swede Anders Sparrmann.

²⁶ This is also evident in his descriptions of the Tasmanians' teeth as 'not of so clear a white as is usual amongst people of a black colour'. William Anderson, 'A Journal of a Voyage Made in His Majesty's Sloop *Resolution*', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Vol. 3, Part II, 785.

²⁷ Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Natural history, general and particular, by the Count de Buffon. Translated into English. Illustrated with three hundred and one copper-plates, and occasional notes and observations by the translator*, trans. William Smellie, 8 Vols, Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, London, 1781, Vol 3, 143. He also notes that 'some' writers thought that the flat nose was a consequence of the infant, carried on their mother's back, repeatedly knocking their nose against their mother as she walks.

²⁸ Buffon, *Natural history*, Vol. 3, 143.

have 'in other times ... forbidden [one] to approach the altar of the Lord'.³⁰ Generally, in the eighteenth century the word flat, when applied to the nose, was a pejorative term imbued with notions of ugliness, deviancy and moral turpitude.³¹ Though no explorer speculated that Aboriginal people may have artificially flattened their noses, clarifying whether or not they possessed this much maligned feature continued to be a major concern, and some like Anderson, would go to great lengths to avoid using the word.³²

In addition to his familiarity with the debates concerning human variety, Anderson's account of the Tasmanian face also revealed his knowledge of another eighteenth-century preoccupation, measuring proportions. He was

²⁹ Buffon, *Natural history*, Vol. 3, 152.

³⁰ For Lavater, this justifies him barring anyone with any physical differences from becoming a physiognomist. Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente*, Vol. 1, 117, cited in Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, 99.

³¹ Gilman also argues that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century belief that the flat nose was a "primitive" nose was 'primarily because the too-flat nose came to be associated with the inherited syphilitic nose', though in his discussion on the syphilitic nose, most of the accounts describe a 'missing' or sunken nose, not a flat nose. However, none of the explorers imply that the Aboriginal nose is diseased. Sander L. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and London, 1999, 85, and 49-60.

³² Anderson's crewmate Samwell agreed with him claiming that the Tasmanians' noses 'though broad or full are not flat'. The French were similarly confused about the Tasmanians' noses. Of the Marion Dufresne expedition de Montesson claimed it was 'moderately flat', whereas his compatriots Crozet and Roux alleged it to be 'flattened' and 'aquiline' respectively; d'Entrecasteaux's captain d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau thought it 'not flat [but] broad; the nostrils are large and flared'; and Baudin and his men Péron and Ransonnet thought it 'flat [but] it in no way resembles the African negroes', 'large épaté', or 'court'. The British also tried to avoid stating that the New Hollanders' noses were flat. Matra claimed it was 'inclining to flatness' and Hunter 'broad'. Samwell, 'Some Account', 993; Paul Chevillard de Montesson, *Journal of the voyage of M. Marion Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand*, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania*, 47; Julien Crozet, *Journal of the voyage of M. Marion Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand*, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania*, 25; Roux, 'Journal du voyage', 42; d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting with the Natives, 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 282; Baudin, *Journal*, 344; François Péron, conférence adressée à "Messieurs les professeurs", décrivant les aborigènes et leurs mœurs près de Port Jackson, No 09032, Dossier 9: Expédition aux Terres Australes Notes du Voyage, côtes Est et Sud de la Nouvelle Hollande (auteurs divers), Collection Lesueur, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre; Joseph Ransonnet, "lettre adressée à Monsieur Péron date de "Paris le 1er mars"", Cat no. 09029, Collection Lesueur du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre. See also extracts from the letter printed in *Voyage aux Terres*

among the few explorers to observe in the Australian indigenes a prognathic jaw, noting that the ‘lower part of the face project[ed] a good deal, as [was] the case in most Indians [he had] seen, so that a line let fall from the forehead would cut off a much larger portion than in Europeans’.³³ This trait was not evident in Anderson’s fellow crewmate John Webber’s drawing of a Tasmanian man, which depicted the face from a three quarter angle rather than in profile and so obscured any suggestion of prognathism. Smith contends that Webber ‘did not make a conceptual point about [the prognathous face] as Anderson did’, for if he had he would have depicted his subject in profile as Nicolas Petit had done in 1802.³⁴ But Webber’s disinterest was not indicative of the time, for the angle of the human profile had stirred European interest for many centuries: Albrecht Dürer depicted facial angles in his instructions on proportions in 1528, and in 1755 German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann posited in his *Reflections*, that the Classical Greek profile, displayed as an almost vertical straight line, was the ideal of beauty.³⁵ Smith contends that Anderson must have been influenced by Petrus Camper’s studies on the facial angle.³⁶

Camper was a Dutch anatomist and artist known for inventing the *linea facialis*, or facial line.³⁷ After sketching the profile of a skull, he drew a contour from the ‘front of the incisor teeth ... to the prominent part of the forehead’, a line which approximates that imagined by Anderson. Camper would then draw a perpendicular line from the ‘nose base to the earhole’, and the angle at which these two lines intersected was the *linea facialis*.³⁸ He found the perfect angle of 100° in Classical Greek statuary, and noted that the European exemplar was the

Australes, 1816, Vol. 2, 153, and second edition, vol. 3, 1824, 260; Matra. *Journal*, 20; and Hunter. *Historical Journal*, 58.

³³ Anderson, ‘A Journal’, 785.

³⁴ John Webber, *A native of Van Diemen’s Land*, pencil and wash. 35.5 x 29.2 cm., 1777, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart, reproduced as Plate 168 in Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 188.

³⁵ Albrecht Dürer, *Hierin sind begriffen vier Bücher von Menschlicher Proportion* (Four Books of Human Proportion), 1528, cited in Miriam Claude Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper (1722-1789)*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1999, 104, and J.J. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*. Bibliothek Klassischer Texte, Darmstadt, 1993, 174, cited in Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, 90.

³⁶ Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 1992, 186-7.

³⁷ Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics*, 107.

³⁸ Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics*, 108.

closest to this ideal with a measure of 80°, and the African, with an angle of 70° was evidently more prognathic. Camper also measured the *linea facialis* of the ape and monkey, and found that the orang-utan possessed an angle of 58°. ³⁹ Unfortunately, this hierarchy of facial angles was popularised for it appeared to empirically confirm the old notion of the Great Chain of Being, and the myth that Africans were closely related to apes. ⁴⁰ Though Anderson did not draw on this popular myth in his discussion of the Tasmanians' prognathism, it evidently crossed the mind of one of the explorers of the next British expedition to Australia, the First Fleet's David Collins.

In his overview of the Aboriginal people of Port Jackson the judge-advocate described their general appearance. He began his description of their visage by categorically stating that 'Their noses [were] flat'. His use of this loaded term is a cue for his disparaging assessment of their looks. After describing their 'eyes much sunk in the head' and their 'extravagantly wide mouths' he then observed that 'Many had very prominent jaws; and there was one man who, but for the gift of speech, might very well have passed for an orang-outang'. ⁴¹ Though he then went on to discuss this man's unusual physique and hirsuteness, ⁴² it was his prominent jaw which catalysed Collins' comparison with the ape. Such associations would become more prolific in the nineteenth century, as tales of mysterious ape-like people living in the

³⁹ Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics*, 108.

⁴⁰ Gilman states that 'According to the contemporary reading of Camper the African was the least beautiful (and therefore the least erotic) because he or she is closest to the ape in his or her physiognomy'. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*, 87. For a broad discussion of European myths on the connection between Africans and apes see Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1968, 28-40, and for an eighteenth-century example, see Jahoda's analysis in Edward Long's *History of Jamaica*, (1774), Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, 53-8.

⁴¹ David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Brian Fletcher (ed.), A.H. & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1975, 459.

⁴² 'He was remarkably hairy; his arms appeared of an uncommon length: in his gait he was not perfectly upright; and in his whole manner seemed to have more of the brute and less of the human species about him than any of his countrymen. Those who have been in that country will, from this outline of him, recollect old We-rahng'. Collins, *Account*, 459.

Australian deserts and analogies of Aboriginal speech to the ‘chatterings of the orang-outang’ became more commonplace.⁴³

The First Fleet officers who spent the most time with Aboriginal people were the most conflicted about describing the indigenous Australian visage. In their overviews of the men’s generic looks many officers were very disparaging. For example, though George Worgan could not say that ‘their Features [were] very irregular’, he did disdainfully take note of their ‘rather thick’ lips, ‘yellow, dark dingy eyes’, and, in his avoidance of the descriptor ‘flat’, stated that they had ‘broad, short Noses with wide Trumpet Nostrils plugged with dry drippings’.⁴⁴ While he did not explicitly judge their looks it is probably safe to assume that he considered them ugly due to the contemporary discourses on the transgressive nose.

German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing observed in 1766 that ‘a flattened nose with prominent nostrils’ was a deformity which ‘produce[d] a sensation that certainly comes much nearer to disgust than what we feel at the sight of other deformities of body’.⁴⁵ Collins echoed this sentiment stating that the men had a ‘disgusting appearance’ because of the ‘bone or reed which they [had] thrust through the cartilage of the nose’.⁴⁶ Perhaps the reason he found it ‘disgusting’ was because, according to John Hunter, this adornment ‘widen[ed] the nostrils, and spread the lower part very much’,⁴⁷ reproducing the so-called deformity despised by Lessing.

Yet, when the officers discuss the individual Aboriginal men with whom they had forged a friendship, they were evidently able to overcome this prescribed reaction, for their representations were quite different. Hunter was the most effusive in his praise, describing Arabanoo, the first man they

⁴³ Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice have traced the influence of Darwinian thought on representations of Aboriginal people as ape-like. See Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice, *Aliens and Savages: Fiction, Politics, and Prejudice in Australia*, HarperCollins Publishers, Pymble, 1998, 67-72.

⁴⁴ George Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon*, Library Council of New South Wales in association with the Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1978, 13.

⁴⁵ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön*, William A. Steele (trans), Everyman’s Library, London, 1970, 89ff, cited in Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*, 88.

⁴⁶ Collins, *Account*, 456.

⁴⁷ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 59.

kidnapped, as 'tolerably well looked',⁴⁸ and Bennelong, their second charge as 'a very good looking young fellow'.⁴⁹ Given that both men were random victims of kidnapping, selected purely by chance, it is unlikely that Arabanoo and Bennelong happened to be unusually handsome. Instead, this is another example of the subjectivity of aesthetic appraisals.

As the British officers developed friendships with these men, no longer perceiving them as anonymous savages but instead as individuals, they came to appreciate their facial features. Perhaps then it was primarily the exoticness of the Aboriginal visage which rendered it unattractive to the Britons? Watkin Tench's attempt to construct a generic composite of their facial features suggests this. He claimed that a 'high forehead, with prominent overhanging eyebrows, [was] their leading characteristic', and acknowledged that 'in spite of [their possessing] a true Negro nose, thick lips, and a wide mouth', all features which the eighteenth-century European considered ugly, their brow gave 'an air of resolute dignity to their aspect'. However, he qualified his complement by stating that this was only the case 'when it [did] not operate to destroy all openness of countenance'.⁵⁰

So Tench was only able to overlook their unattractive physiognomy provided their expressions were open and friendly. This would categorise as ugly all but the most naïve, for many Aborigines were wary of the strangers, and admit as attractive only those forced to engage with the Britons, such as Arabanoo and Bennelong. Aesthetic judgements, therefore, were not only determined by idiosyncratic tastes, but also by the countenance of the subject. Interpreting the underlying feelings revealed by the look of a person's face was considered an important skill in the eighteenth century as evidenced by the popularity of pathognomy and physiognomy, and one in which the explorers

⁴⁸ John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792*, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H. L. Ball, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 93. Watkin Tench was similarly appreciative of Arabanoo's looks, thinking that he possessed a 'countenance which, under happier circumstances, I thought would display manliness and sensibility'. Watkin Tench, *1788: Comprising 'A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay' and 'A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson'*, Tim Flannery (ed.), The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793], 95.

⁴⁹ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 168.

⁵⁰ Tench, *1788*, 245.

invested heavily, especially since they could not confidently communicate with the Aborigines without any risk of equivocation.⁵¹

The countenance could be read as a useful text, but only if it could be supported by some other evidence, such as context or familiarity with the subject. An interesting example of this concerned an incident with Bennelong. When he was first captured Tench perceived in him a 'bold intrepid countenance which bespoke defiance and revenge'.⁵² Yet, after governor Arthur Phillip established a close friendship with him (evidenced by the fact that he called Bennelong *dooroow* or 'son', and was in turn referred to as *be-anna* or 'father'), Phillip saw otherwise in his countenance. This particular occasion involved a protracted dispute over a young woman named Boorong whom Bennelong had kidnapped and planned to kill in revenge for an injury inflicted on him by her father.⁵³ After Bennelong had violently attacked this woman several times, even in front of the British officers, the Governor offered her sanctuary in his house. But Boorong wanted to leave the house with the others who had been staying at Bennelong's hut, including a young man whom Phillip had assumed to be her husband. After Phillip attempted to make the girl understand that 'if she went away she would be beat', Bennelong promised that he would not hurt her, and the Governor saw 'so much sincerity in Bennelong's countenance, when he said she should not be beat, that leave was given'.⁵⁴ The other officers were astounded by Phillip's decision, especially Collins whose warnings to Bennelong that he would be executed if he hurt Boorong had

⁵¹ Scott Juengel, in his analysis of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* posits that it is not surprising that given an 'unfamiliar[ity] with native languages' that the face becomes an 'expressive marker of race, class, sensibility and compatibility'. Scott Juengel, 'Countenancing History: Mary Wollstonecraft, Samuel Stanhope Smith, and Enlightenment Racial Science', *ELH*, Vol. 68, 2001. 901.

⁵² Tench, 1788, 117.

⁵³ Arthur Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H. L. Ball*, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 321. Clendinnen sees this episode as a cultural misunderstanding. She alleges that this was Bennelong's attempt to prove to Phillip that he too has a position of authority within his own polity, and had a level of autonomy within the colony, especially when resident within his own house. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 149-151.

⁵⁴ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 322-3.

previously been defied.⁵⁵ The ‘general opinion was that the girl would be sacrificed’, for this was a man whose countenance and words expressed vengeance. however, ‘Governor Phillip himself was fully persuaded that Bannelong [sic] would keep his word’.⁵⁶ And remarkably he did. So interpreting the countenance could be a useful practice when there was a close relationship between the subject and the ‘reader’, however, it was less practical in divining the meaning of indigenous cultural practices.

The absence of a common language ensured that learning about the indigenous culture was a difficult task as interviews were largely futile exercises. Many explorers had to rely upon reading other signs to flesh out their ethnographies, and one of these was the countenance. One question that intrigued Collins was whether or not Aboriginal people were ‘capable of feeling sorrow’. His opportunity to answer this question finally arose upon the death of a young man named Ballooderry. At his burial Collins observed that the man’s father Mau-go-ran had ‘tears straining silently down his sable cheek ... but in a little time they were dried’. The Judge-Advocate searched ‘the old man’s countenance’ for any signs of emotion but could see nothing other than ‘the lapse of so many years which had passed over his head’.⁵⁷ Collins perceived the father’s countenance as blank, so posited that ‘they are not in the habit of encouraging long’ feelings of sorrow.⁵⁸ This was a very bold claim to make about a complex social ritual like mourning, especially based on such slim and indefinite evidence as the countenance of one individual. However, it was not as audacious as it appeared because Collins did not have the benefit of a common language, and was saddled with a contemporary European faith in the sciences of pathognomy and physiognomy, which ostensibly laid bare the subjects’ underlying emotions.

The French explorers also attempted to read the countenance of the Aboriginal men, and similarly believed that it would reveal their innate

⁵⁵ ‘when the judge-advocate reasoned with him, and told him that if he killed the girl the governor would kill him, he marked with his finger those parts of the head, breast and arms where he said he would wound her, before he cut her head off’. Phillip, ‘Phillip’s Journal’, 321.

⁵⁶ Phillip, ‘Phillip’s Journal’, 323.

⁵⁷ Collins, *Account*, 499.

⁵⁸ Collins, *Account*, 499.

character. Their most detailed representations of the indigenous face pertain to the Tasmanian men, because this was where they had the opportunity to spend the longest time with the indigenes, and to get close enough to distinguish their features. The first French experiences, however, were far from friendly. In 1772 Marion Dufresne's men were attacked with a volley of stones, so returned fire, killing at least one Tasmanian. Needless to say this assault influenced their perception of the indigenous men's looks. Lieutenant Le Dez thought they had 'harsh features and a wild appearance' and ensign Jean Roux petulantly stated that 'They have a very ugly and mean face'.⁵⁹ In contrast to this, the men led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux twenty years later found the Tasmanian men to be amicable and accommodating. Consequently they considered the men they saw to have 'an agreeable countenance [and] gentle appearance'.⁶⁰ The impact of the explorers' reception on their evaluations of the Tasmanians' face is confirmed when we examine François Péron's representations.

When the *Naturaliste* and the *Géographe* first arrived in Tasmania in 1802, Baudin's naturalist beheld an Arcadian vision. Péron was immediately taken with the landscape, and thought it complemented by its inhabitants. The first Tasmanian he saw appeared to be an exemplar of the natural man, physically dexterous and inquisitive. Péron claimed that his 'physiognomy had nothing fierce or austere, his eyes were lively and expressive, and his manner displayed at once both pleasure and surprise'.⁶¹ The man's older companion had a 'frank and open' countenance 'notwithstanding some unequivocal signs of fear and disquiet'.⁶² However, this was Péron's first encounter, and not all his encounters were so friendly.

A short while later, after having first whiled away the time interviewing and singing with a group of Tasmanian women, the French were soon set upon by their companions' husbands. Péron perceived in the men's faces a very

⁵⁹ Le Dez, *Extrait d'un nouveau voyage en australazie en 1772*, Archives Nationales, Paris, (Archives Privées). Fond Bougainville 155 AP 3 pièce 4, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania*, 33, and Roux, 'Journal du voyage', 42.

⁶⁰ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 282.

⁶¹ François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 173.

⁶² Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 174.

different attitude to that of his earlier acquaintances. These men ‘maintained a sulky dissatisfied expression of countenance, their looks were fierce and menacing’.⁶³ The Frenchman assumed that the men’s air was due to their suppressed frustration over their martial inadequacy: clearly jealous about their wives, the men ‘endeavoured to conceal’ their mortification at their own inability ‘to contend with’ the Europeans.⁶⁴ Péron did not entertain the notion that he may have just imagined his own anxieties reflected in their expressions, for the Frenchmen were greatly outnumbered, and though comforted by their weapons, could not be certain that the Tasmanians shared their faith in the superiority of the musket.

This second experience irreparably tainted Péron’s perceptions of the Tasmanians, for while he saw their faces as ‘abundantly expressive’ and their passions ‘strongly marked’, he thought their emotions now manifested in transgressive ways, revealing their innately treacherous and savage characters. When the Tasmanians menaced the explorers, Péron thought ‘they appear[ed] at once suspicious, restless and perfidious’. This was not an inappropriate judgement in this particular context, but his prejudice was revealed in his similar condemnation of their other expressions. When they were happy, he claimed that they ‘had the appearance of madness’; and even the elderly were not spared his misgivings for he saw their expression as ‘at once sad, sullen and severe’. After cataloguing their range of dubious expressions he concluded that ‘among all these people, there [was] to be noticed at some moments an insincerity and ferocity, which [could not] escape the attentive observer, and which but too well correspond[ed] with their character’.⁶⁵

Not all of Péron’s compatriots were so rigid in their perceptions. Post-captain Nicolas Baudin thought that their ‘expression was one of liveliness and even gaiety’, and while he did perceive their glance as ‘restless’ he generously assumed that this was ‘perhaps the result of the distrust that men so different from themselves must have aroused in them’, and not indicative of their innate

⁶³ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 199.

⁶⁴ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 217-8.

⁶⁵ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 199.

character.⁶⁶ But the explorers' representations of the Aboriginal visage were not only influenced by western tastes and racial discourses, the indigenous countenance, or the circumstances of their encounters; the Europeans were also distracted by the novelty of the various Aboriginal facial modifications.

iii. embellishing the face

The two facial modifications which garnered the most interest were tooth avulsion and nasal piercing. The only indigenous cultural practice which Dampier discussed was the removal of the 'two fore-teeth in their upper jaw', which he had noticed was common to 'all of them, men and women, old and young', though he was not certain that the teeth were deliberately extracted.⁶⁷ This suggestion of a customary ritual tantalised the explorers who keenly sought clarification. Banks admitted that the Endeavour River people, the only 'tribe' with which they 'had Connections', all 'had their fore-teeth', so 'differ[ed] chiefly from those seen by Dampier'.⁶⁸ But at Port Jackson, Watkin Tench was able to happily report that 'The deficiency of one of the fore teeth of the upper jaw, mentioned by Dampier, we had seen in almost the whole of the men'.⁶⁹ Perhaps it is due to the infamous buccaneer that the eighteenth-century explorers so carefully described the Aboriginal men's teeth.

There was a difference in the accounts between the teeth of the mainland Aborigines and the Tasmanians. The New Hollanders' teeth were generally described as 'sound',⁷⁰ whilst the explorers were more effusive about the Tasmanians' teeth: even Marion Dufresne's men, whose attack led to them

⁶⁶ Baudin, *Journal*, 303 and 344.

⁶⁷ Dampier, *A New Voyage*, 218-9.

⁶⁸ Banks, *The Australian Journey*, 98.

⁶⁹ Tench, 1788, 51. Flinders charts the most explicit map of this practice: 'It is worthy of remark, that the three natives seen at Horse-shoe Island had lost the *two* upper front teeth; and Dampier, in speaking of the inhabitants of the North-west Coast, says, "the two front teeth of the upper jaw are wanting in all of them, men women, old and young". Nothing of this kind was observed in the natives of the islands in Torres Strait, not at Keppel, Hervey's, or Glass-house Bays, on the East Coast; yet at Port Jackson, further south, it is the custom for the boys, on arriving at the age of puberty, to have one of the upper front teeth knocked out, but no more; nor are the girls subject to the same operation'. He then continues to list all of the places where he had observed whether or not the Aborigines practice tooth avulsion. Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, G&W Nicol, Pall Mall, 1814. Vols 2 and 3, 146.

⁷⁰ Worgan, *Journal*, 13 and Collins, *Account*, 459.

making the most disparaging evaluations of the men's looks, still contended that they possessed very white, fine teeth.⁷¹ Nicolas Baudin noted that their teeth were so 'large, healthy, and well-set' that they appeared to be 'filed down'.⁷² This hints at how disturbing some of the explorers may have found the Tasmanian's perfect teeth, remembering how poor European dental health was in the eighteenth century.⁷³ Péron, gazing at the men's 'enormous' mouths, could only see that they were 'armed with large and strong teeth'.⁷⁴ The British on the other hand were more critical of the Tasmanian's teeth: Anderson noted that they were not so 'well-set' and 'not of so clear a white as [was] usual amongst people of a black colour', and his crewmate Samwell simply judged them to be 'bad'.⁷⁵ The disparity between the French and British evaluations is somewhat baffling.

All expeditions landed within the same region, and Cook arrived only eight years after Marion Dufresne, whilst twenty years had elapsed between the two French visits, so it is improbable that indigenous dental care had changed. Further, it is unlikely that British teeth were healthier than French, because, according to Mark Blackwell, their sugar industry had dramatically impaired dental hygiene in the eighteenth-century, and modern dentistry emerged in France decades before it had been introduced in Britain.⁷⁶ Consequently, the differences must be attributed to Anderson's high expectations about the teeth of 'black' people, for his anticipation was echoed by Tench, who held that their 'teeth [were] not so white and good as those generally found in Indian nations'.

⁷¹ de Montesson, *Journal*, 47, and Crozet, *Journal*, 25.

⁷² Baudin, *Journal*, 344.

⁷³ Mark Blackwell notes that dental disease was more prevalent in the eighteenth century than earlier eras because of the dramatic increase in sugar consumption, especially amongst the wealthy. Also, one of the most noticeable symptoms of both venereal disease and its cures was the loss of teeth. Adding to this picture of poorly teeth, is the fact that the wealthy tried to circumvent this by purchasing teeth for transplants, procedures developed in France and Italy which became very popular in Britain. Consequently, the European dental landscape would have been full of missing teeth and 'damaged or rotten incisors, cuspids of bicuspid's, for even Governor Phillip had a missing front tooth. So the healthy, well-set Tasmanian teeth, must have appeared very strange. Mark Blackwell, "'Extraneous Bodies": The Contagion of Live-Tooth Transplantation in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2004, 21-68.

⁷⁴ 'leur bouche énorme armée de larges et fortes dents'. My emphasis. François Péron, 'Conférence adressée à "Messieurs les professeurs"'.
⁷⁵ Anderson, 'A Journal', 785.

⁷⁶ Blackwell, "'Extraneous Bodies'", 24-5, and 32-3.

He posited that this was because the men bit ‘sticks, stones, shells, and all other hard substances indiscriminately with them, which quickly destroy[ed] the enamel and [gave] them a jagged and uneven appearance’.⁷⁷ Yet, none of his compatriots concurred, perhaps because they were largely preoccupied by the space from which the right front tooth had been deliberately extracted.

Excluding Dampier’s observation, the only place in which the eighteenth-century explorers witnessed tooth avulsion was in New South Wales. Noting that ‘Every one had the tooth next to the fore tooth in his upper jaw knock’d out’, the British were ‘at a Loss as to y^e Motive of this Custom’.⁷⁸ However, the First Fleet officers quickly recognised that the missing tooth was highly significant within the local polity, for George Worgan had endured their rough investigations: he claimed that ‘they will sometimes thrust their Fingers into your mouth to see if you have parted with this Tooth’.⁷⁹ The governor thought he might benefit from the esteem that his similar circumstance might receive, for when he first recognised that the men of Broken Bay were missing their right front tooth he quickly pointed out that his too was similarly absent. This ‘occasioned a general clamour’, and it was thought that the Aborigines subsequently held him in a higher regard, though it is difficult to say if this was the case for he shortly after returned to Port Jackson.⁸⁰ Then, as the Britons explored further inland they realised that tooth avulsion was not a universal practice in New South Wales.

On the 14 April 1791, during his expedition to Rose Hill, Tench and his guides Colbee and Boladeree encountered a new man, Yèllomundee, and his son Dèeimba. Realising that he was only 38 miles from the coast, Tench was surprised to see that these two possessed all of their teeth, and was chagrined that his two Port Jackson interpreters refused to translate his questions on the

⁷⁷ Tench, 1788, 245.

⁷⁸ Arthur Bowes Smyth, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon on Lady Penryth 1787-89*, Paul G. Fidler and R.J. Ryan (eds), Australian Document Library, Sydney, 1979, 57, and Worgan, *Journal*, 14.

⁷⁹ Worgan, *Journal*, 14.

⁸⁰ Arthur Phillip, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time by Lord Auckland*, James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 42.

matter, and indeed 'showed every desire to waive the subject'.⁸¹ Colbee and Boladeree's reluctance to discuss tooth avulsion seemed to confirm the British suspicion that it was 'a mark of subjection imposed by the tribe of Cameragal (who are certainly the most powerful community in the country) on the weaker tribes around them'.⁸²

The imperial lens through which the British viewed the world led them to assume that the extracted tooth was a form of tithing, and it would be another four years before their misconception would be clarified. This false impression was a consequence of their poor communication, for Collins admitted that when Bennelong had first explained tooth avulsion shortly after his capture, the British thought that a man called Cammerragal wore the teeth around his neck, but 'afterwards found that this term was only the distinguishing title of the tribe which performed the ceremonies incident to the operation'.⁸³ Rather than being a tithe, the missing tooth represented one's adult status.

In 1795 Collins had the privilege of witnessing the *Yoo-lahng erah-ba-diahng* ceremony, whereby boys had their front tooth removed to catalyse and signify their transition to manhood.⁸⁴ Collins wrote an extensive and detailed account of the ritual, often guessing at the meaning of each action and object and with the aid of his artist published eight engraved plates representing each stage of the ceremony. Collins noted that the '*Yoo-lahng erah-ba-diahng*' had previously taken place in February 1791 but he had not been permitted to observe it, so while he was aware that Aboriginal boys were initiated he had not grasped what the ceremony entailed and therefore its full significance. Before it took place a large number of Aboriginal people from the Sydney region congregated at Farm Cove clearing the '*Yoo-lahng*', or ceremonial space, during the day, dancing through the night, and awaiting the arrival of the Cameragal people.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Tench, 1788, 193-4.

⁸² Tench, 1788, 194 and Collins, *Account*, 458.

⁸³ Collins, *Account*, 485.

⁸⁴ The ritual significance of the tooth removal ceremony was indicated by this name, whereas the loss of any other tooth was referred to by the term 'bool-bag-ga'. Collins, *Account*, 485.

⁸⁵ Collins, *Account*, 467.

The first stage of the ceremony was represented by Collins as a stylised kidnapping of each of the boys by the Cameragal warriors, who let out 'a shout peculiar to this occasion, clattering their shields and spears, and raising a dust with their feet'. After each boy had been taken and imprisoned within a 'grove of spears', they were pressed into an 'awkward and painful' position, and required to hold it all night, as well as forgoing any 'refreshment whatsoever'. The 'carrahdis', who performed the 'mystical rites', then in turn fell into contortions as they appeared to deliver a bone from their torsos which would eventually be used in the ceremony (though Collins demystified the ritual by churlishly pointing out that the bone had previously been concealed in their girdles). He was also advised by his guide that the boys would suffer less pain than the carrahdis had just endured when they succumbed to the operation the next day.

When Collins returned the following morning to observe the rest of the ceremony, he carefully documented the sequence of events, ensuring that each was illustrated by his accompanying artist. Firstly, the 'carrahdis and their associates' gathered in a circle where they 'imitated the dogs of the country', endowing the boys, according to the sceptical Briton, with 'whatever good or beneficial qualities that animal might possess'. Collins was impressed that the 'during the ceremony the boys sat perfectly still and silent' not reacting to the carrahdis' ostensibly 'ridiculous appearance'.⁸⁶ The next stage of the ritual entailed the boys being offered an effigy of a kangaroo and some brushwood, which Collins assumed represented their power to kill the animal. This then followed a sequence whereby the carrahdis, whom Collins now referred to as 'actors', represented a kangaroo hunt. Though he presumably recognised the importance of this skill he was still amused by this portion of the ritual, and found it 'altogether whimsical and curious'.⁸⁷ Each 'actor' then took one of the boys upon their shoulders, and carried him a short distance before releasing him to stand and await the next stage.

⁸⁶ Collins, *Account*, 469.

⁸⁷ Collins, *Account*, 473.

Collins' interest was piqued by the secretive nature of the next phase, for the *carrahdis* absented themselves to get ready and barred Collins from watching. When they were prepared Collins found that the men and boys had been arranged in a perplexing manner; some lying on the ground, and others balanced upon the shoulders of another. He related the actions but had no idea of their significance, for none of the men whom he questioned responded to his satisfaction, merely stating that 'it was very good; that the boys would now become brave men; that they would see well, and fight well'.⁸⁸ Collins was evidently surprised at the opacity of the meaning for this particular stage, given that he had arrogantly presumed the significance of all the previous parts of the ceremony. He felt more confident interpreting the next sequence though, as it involved the use of the spear, 'an exercise which was to form the principal business of their lives'.⁸⁹

Finally it was time for the tooth avulsion. Upon his turn each boy was seated upon the shoulders of one of the men, and had his gum lanced with the special bone extracted from the *carrahdis*' side the previous evening. In a great performance, a tool was then fashioned from a throwing stick and with much ceremony applied to the tooth like a chisel then hammered with a stone.⁹⁰ Collins thought that the *carrahdis*' assistants 'made the most hideous noise in the ears of the patients' as a means of distracting them from the pain, for while he documented the utterances, he did not recognise them as words, and certainly did not entertain the notion that the chanting served any arcane purpose. Collins was then able to surreptitiously procure three teeth from Bennelong's sister and Colbee's wife, and promised not to let the Cameragal men find out because they were supposed to receive them.⁹¹

Following the tooth avulsion the boys were then ritually dressed and ordered not to eat or speak for the day.⁹² Collins only watched this 'operation'

⁸⁸ Collins, *Account*, 477.

⁸⁹ Collins, *Account*, 479.

⁹⁰ Collins later praises the technique, for upon showing some of the removed teeth to some 'medical gentlemen' both in the colony and in England, they all testified that 'they could not have been better extracted, had the proper instrument been used'. Collins, *Account*, 485.

⁹¹ Collins, *Account*, 485.

⁹² Collins, *Account*, 481.

performed on 'three or four of the boys' and missed a section of the ceremony because he returned to town for a while. Upon his return he found the boys all 'seated on the trunk of a tree', and then '[s]uddenly, on a signal being given, they all started up, and rushed into town, driving before them men, women, and children'. Collins thought that they 'were now received into the class of men; were privileged to wield the spear and the club, and to oppose their persons in combat. They might also now seize such females as they chose for wives'.⁹³

Collins' account of the tooth avulsion ceremony is a valuable record for it finely details the Aborigines' elaborate masculine rite. However, his description is filtered through his cultural myopia. He assumed that the ultimate significance of the ritual was that it sanctioned the boys to now live, if not by the sword, then by the club: enabling them to bear weapons, fight, and pillage women. Despite having witnessed the esteem given to the Cameragal carrahdis for their knowledge and access to the sacred realm, he dismissed them as 'actors', and did not recognise this as a potential masculine role now open to the former boys. The British even had reason to believe that this role was an esteemed 'office', for governor Phillip reported an incident with Bannelong in which he appeared to boast about having performed this operation himself: 'Bannelong had a throwing stick which he took pains to shew had been cut for the purpose of knocking out the front tooth, and there was some reason to think he had performed that office'.⁹⁴ Despite the shortcomings of Collins' interpretation, he did at least acknowledge the significance of the process of the ritual, a recognition not afforded the other main facial modification practiced by the Aboriginal men.

Throughout the east coast of the continent the explorers observed that most men had their nasal cartilage pierced, and that on occasion they wore this piercing with a bone or some other adornment. Most of the explorers assumed that its sole purpose was decorative, though considered it a 'ludicrous' ornament. The *Endeavour* crew were the first to observe the piercings, and Banks assumed that their 'chief' ornament was 'a bone about 5 or 6 inches in

⁹³ Collins, *Account*, 483.

⁹⁴ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 332.

length and as thick as a mans [sic] finger', which 'divide[d] the nostrils so that it sticks across their face'. The ornament was disdainfully referred to as a 'spritsail yard' because it appeared to be 'riggd across' the face. though Banks hastened to add that this phrase was only employed by the sailors.⁹⁵ This term was also adopted by the First Fleet sailors, and adapted by the French 'matelots' who referred to it as the 'civadière yard'.⁹⁶ The only man of letters who admitted to using the derisive term was the First Fleet surgeon Arthur Bowes Smyth.⁹⁷ Perhaps the naturalists and officers were keen to distance themselves from this low-brow mockery as it was one instance in which a degree of cultural relativity could easily be afforded: the nasal piercing was perceived as a mere decoration.

The *Endeavour's* James Matra sanctimoniously lectured that 'however ludicrous it might appear, it is just to observe, that many of our European ornaments have no more relation to natural fitness or utility, than this unexpensive one which the poor ignorant New Hollanders have invented'.⁹⁸ His uncharacteristic defence of the Aborigines may have been influenced by the contemporary criticisms of the frivolous and extravagant indulgences of the elite, and the elevation of utility as the greatest measure of beauty.⁹⁹ Hinting at the interesting debates which may have raged on the *Endeavour*, Banks justified his criticism of the nasal piercing by claiming that 'it completely stop'd up both nostrils so that they spoke in a manner one should think scarce intelligible'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 99.

⁹⁶ Phillip states that 'The perforation of the cartilage that divides the nostrils, and the strange disfiguring ornament of a long bone or stick thrust through it, was now observed, as described by Captain Cook; and the same appellation of *sprit-sail yard* was ludicrously applied to it by the sailors.' Arthur Phillip, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time by Lord Auckland*, James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 42. Milius describes the adornment as 'un bâton de 12 à 15 pouces de long qui leur traverse le cartilage du nez et que nos matelots appellaient vergue de civadière'. A civadière was a premetric unit of measure, equivalent to 247m². Pierre Bernard Milius, *Recit du Voyage aux Terres Australes par Pierre Bernard Milius, Second su le Naturaliste dans l'expédition Baudin (1800-1804)*, Jacqueline Bonnemains and Pascale Hauguel, (eds.), Société havraise d'études diverses, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre. Le Havre, 1987, 48.

⁹⁷ Bowes Smyth states that 'from its great similitude we ludicrously gave it the name of a Sprit Sail Yard'. Bowes Smyth, *Journal*, 57.

⁹⁸ Matra, *Journal*, 63.

⁹⁹ For a discussion of utility and beauty see Paul Guyer's analysis of David Hume. Paul Guyer, 'Beauty and Utility in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2002, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 99.

Needless to say, this is an inane criticism for it is improbable that Aboriginal people adopted a practice which handicapped their communication, and further it is an allegation which Banks could not verify because he did not speak their language, so was unable to ascertain whether any of their utterances were 'intelligible' or not.

Eventually greater contact with Aboriginal people allowed the explorers to perceive other reasons for nasal piercing. Phillip decided that they must have been 'marks of distinction', for he noticed that not all the men 'had their noses prepared to receive that grotesque appendage'. He also adopted a cultural relativist stance and acknowledged that 'ambition must have its badges', so while the European wore certain clothes to signal their status and station for the naked Aborigine 'the body itself must be compelled to bear them'.¹⁰¹ The explorers recognised that the piercing indicated the Aboriginal youths' entrée to adulthood, for the piercing occurred in the *Yoo-lahng erah-ba-diahng* ceremony just described. Collins had noticed previously that the also boys returned from a similar ceremony 'dignified with this strange ornament'.¹⁰² The jewellery was significant. While most of the men used 'the small bone in the leg of a kangaroo, one end of which [was] sharpened to a point', during the *Yoo-lahng erah-ba-diahng* ceremony Collins noticed that one of the carrahdis wore 'one or two flowering shrubs through the *septum nasi*', to signify the natural environment of the kangaroo, which the boys were thereafter entitled to hunt.¹⁰³

However, despite this recognition the explorers still found it difficult to take the practice seriously, as evident by Collins' brief report on this aspect of the ceremony compared to the tooth avulsion rite. Though, contributing to the mirthful representations of nasal piercing were some of the humorous incidents associated with it. While most of the men had their noses pierced, they did not always wear an adornment, and Hunter noted that it was the minority who wore

¹⁰¹ Arthur Phillip. *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time by Lord Auckland*. James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 42.

¹⁰² Collins, *Account*, 458.

¹⁰³ Collins, *Account*, 458 and 471. This man is illustrated in the engraved plate 'Yoo-long Erah-ba-diang, No. 2', in Collins, *Account*, 470.

a 'stick or small bone'.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, though the piercing could, according to Cook, accommodate a bone as 'thick as his finger', the aperture was not obvious,¹⁰⁵ so it was not immediately apparent to the Aboriginal men that the Europeans did not also have their noses pierced. Worgan reported that one of the Port Jackson men wanted to know if he 'likewise' had 'the hole in that part', and in order to find out 'picked up a Quill one Day' and tried to 'poke it through [Worgan's] Nose'. Not satisfied with trying his experiment on the poor surgeon, the 'Fellow' then performed the same test on 'two or three other Gentlemen's' noses. Out of a sense of solidarity with the strangers, the man then showed them that he too 'could not wear it in his own [nose]' since he also lacked the 'mark of distinction'.¹⁰⁶ Suggesting this absence was a cause for shame, the man then slowly shook his head.

Tooth avulsion and nasal piercing were two facial modifications which gave the explorers many insights into Aboriginal culture and social structures, and despite some attempts at cultural relativism the poverty of these adornments also bolstered the Europeans' belief that the Aborigines would benefit from a superior civilisation. Yet, studying the Aboriginal male face was not always a comfortable experience, for while the Europeans examined the black men's faces, they soon realised that the natives were in turn scrutinising them.

iv. losing face

The explorers' depictions of facial features were not limited to their physical nature for each has a specific purpose: to house the different organs of sense, enabling one to smell, taste, hear, and, most importantly, see. The eighteenth-century philosopher and scientist alike were fascinated by the study of human sensations, for advances in anatomy enabled them to study the physiology of the sense organs, and theories on the progress of man influenced questions on differences in discernment. Consequently, an analysis of their representations of

¹⁰⁴ William Bradley. *A Voyage to New South Wales: The Journal of Lieutenant William Bradley RN of HMS Sirius, 1786-1792*. Facsim. Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1969, 73.

¹⁰⁵ As evident by Cook's close examination of the men's noses to ascertain if they had all been pierced Cook, *Journals*, 1: 358.

¹⁰⁶ Worgan, *Journal*, 14 and Phillip, *Voyage*, 42.

the visage also entails an investigation of how the explorers perceived Aboriginal perceptions. Unfortunately for most of the explorers, their expectations that the Aboriginal men would be astounded and impressed by what they took in of the Europeans' corporeality and material culture went unrealised, and instead they were often embarrassed by the indigenes' lacklustre responses.

Most of the explorers documented some examples of Aboriginal sensations, though Baudin's expedition was the only one specifically instructed to conduct a study; indeed Joseph-Marie de Gérando listed the investigation of the 'senses of the Savage' as one of their main objectives.¹⁰⁷ He urged them to ascertain which of their senses were most frequently called upon, what circumstances influenced their development, to compare their faculties of sense to that of the Europeans, and ascertain 'what class and species of sensation do they attach most pleasure?'¹⁰⁸ He even proposed a methodology, though his ignorance of the practical circumstances the explorers often found themselves in was patently obvious. He suggested that the ethnographer should judge each particular sense against the following criteria:

1. the art with which two or more sensations are distinguished; 2. the tenuity of sensations that can be noticed; 3. the number of sensations that can be simultaneously grasped; 4. the speed with which the operations are carried out; 5. the capacity to prolong them for a more or less long period without fatigue; 6. finally, the precision of the judgements which sometimes accompany them.¹⁰⁹

The explorers rarely had the opportunity to employ de Gérando's carefully constructed technique, and most, including Baudin's men, adopted a more straightforward approach: they simply documented the Aborigines' reactions to various objects.

This approach was most apparent in the Europeans' attempts to gauge the indigenes' sense of smell. For example, Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, d'Entrecasteaux's captain on the *Recherche*, gave an old Tasmanian man 'a

¹⁰⁷ Joseph-Marie de Gérando, *The Observation of Savage Peoples*, F.C.T. Moore (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969, 82.

¹⁰⁸ De Gérando, *Observation*, 82.

¹⁰⁹ De Gérando, *Observation*, 82.

sniff of eau de Cologne'. The man responded by making 'a slight face', leading the Frenchman to infer that 'he did not like this smell, which was apparently too strong'.¹¹⁰ Alternatively, the explorers simply noted the Aboriginal men's reactions when the opportunity arose, for example Governor Phillip observed one man 'after having touched a piece of pork, held out his finger for his companions to smell, with strong marks of distaste'. In this instance Phillip was slightly affronted by the man's disregard for the aroma of his food, for he prefaced this account by stating that despite the fact that the 'bodies of these people in general smell strongly of oil ... they are not without emotions of disgust, when they meet with strong effluvia to which their organs are unaccustomed'.¹¹¹

Their olfactory revulsion must have stunned the Britons for Tench contemptuously observed that the 'rank offensive smell which disgusts so much in the Negro, prevails strongly among them'.¹¹² He continues by claiming, however, that those who moved into the settlement and had been 'taught habits of cleanliness', were no longer so malodorous, hinting at one of the purposes of gauging their sense of smell. The Governor had hoped that introducing the Aborigines to the benefits of clothing might make them less insensible to the cold, and inveigle them to reside with the colonists.¹¹³ Perhaps, the Britons hoped that inuring them to the smell of western toiletries might similarly facilitate their assimilation and co-habitation in the settlement?

The Aborigines' strict diet also intrigued the explorers. It was hoped that the breaking of bread would lead to the Aborigines welcoming the strangers, but unfortunately they usually 'return'd it or threw it away without so much as tasting it'.¹¹⁴ On the rare occasion in which the Aborigines did try to taste the bread, they 'threw the rest back in [the Europeans'] faces with a kind of

¹¹⁰ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's third meeting', 286.

¹¹¹ Arthur Phillip, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time by Lord Auckland*, James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 78.

¹¹² Tench, *1788*, 245.

¹¹³ Phillip, *Voyage*, 138 and 141.

¹¹⁴ Cook, *Journals*, 1: 52.

disdain'.¹¹⁵ This reluctance to taste European fare was perplexing, for they happily accepted any local produce, such as fish or turtles on the mainland and lobster in Tasmania, so their reticence was not solely an artefact of their disinclination to fraternise with the foreigners. Elisabeth-Paul-Edouard de Rossel, d'Entrecasteaux's lieutenant and astronomer, speculated on the Tasmanians' unwillingness to partake of European meals. He wondered if it might be attributed to 'some unfortunate experience they had with previous navigators', but was 'inclined to think' that they instinctively only wanted to 'eat the sort of food with which their upbringing ... had acquainted them'.¹¹⁶ Despite recognising the Tasmanians' conservative tastes the French persisted in trying to tempt them.

The explorers hoped that alcohol would be an enticing lure as their rations of beer, wine, and spirits were prized possessions constituting one of their scant shipboard luxuries. One of d'Entrecasteaux's sailors 'imagined he could not regale [the Tasmanians] better than by offering them brandy'. However, he was vexed to find that the men promptly spat the liquor out.¹¹⁷ The naturalist Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière observed that 'it appeared to occasion them an extremely disagreeable sensation'.¹¹⁸ Such fussy tastebuds must have surprised the Frenchmen for they had observed that the Tasmanians were 'infinitely unparticular about water' and would happily drink it no matter how 'turbid and muddy', simply 'spitting out the foreign bodies that they could not swallow'.¹¹⁹ The British observed a similar aversion to alcohol among some

¹¹⁵ Le Dez, *Extrait*, 32.

¹¹⁶ Elisabeth-Paul-Edouard de Rossel, 'Voyage de d'Entrecasteaux, 1808, Vol. 1, in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 308. Baudin noted instances in which the Tasmanians would 'neither eat or drink anything our men took ashore with them'. Baudin, *Journal*, 305 and 318.

¹¹⁷ One of Baudin's sailors also tried to instigate a friendly exchange with the Tasmanians by giving a young man a bottle of arrack, which was a valuable part of the crew's alcohol allowance, but the man threw the bottle overboard without even tasting it, causing the rebuffed sailor to dive into the water to rescue it. Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 174.

¹¹⁸ Jacques de Labillardière, *An Account of a voyage in search of La Pérouse*, J. Debrett, London, 1800, in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 290.

¹¹⁹ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting with the Natives, 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the*

of the New Hollanders. Arabanoo and Colbee, their early kidnapping victims, allowed themselves to smell the various 'liquors' offered, but refused to try it, drinking only water.¹²⁰ Bennelong was the notable exception.

The British were struck by his immediate fondness for their 'viands', drinking 'with eager marks of delight and enjoyment'. Tench was particularly surprised that Bennelong was not more affected by alcohol despite fermented drinks being new to him.¹²¹ In the end though, Bennelong's tendency to over-imbibe overshadowed other aspects of his life and character.¹²² When Baudin's expedition arrived at Port Jackson in 1803 Pierre Bernard Milius had the opportunity to meet him,¹²³ and was at first charmed by his 'rather good' English and reminiscences about his years spent in England. But he found that Bennelong 'would drink to the health of Lady Dundas and would have happily drunk to the health of all the ladies of England had I been inclined to pour him more drinks'.¹²⁴ The Frenchman soon grew weary of Bennelong's over-indulgence, and 'was obliged on several occasions to throw him out'.¹²⁵ Fortunately not all of the explorers' experiments on their subjects' senses led to such ignominious ends for the Aborigines.

The explorers were also keen to test their hearing to see how the men would be affected by the sounds they heard and particularly how they would react to music. De Gérando specifically instructed Baudin's men to examine Aboriginal songs and musical instruments because these were among the main

Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 282.

¹²⁰ Tench, 1788, 96 and 117.

¹²¹ Tench, 1788, 117-8.

¹²² His obituary stated that 'His propensity for drunkenness was inordinate; and when in this state he was insolent, menacing and overbearing. In fact, he was a thorough savage, not to be warped from the form and character that nature gave him by all the efforts that mankind could use'. *Sydney Gazette*, 3 January 1813, cited in Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, 271.

¹²³ Milius refers to this man as Banedou, but he must be referring to Bennelong for he states that this man had lived a number of years in England. Bennelong went to England with Governor Phillip in 1792 and after several requests, returned to Sydney in 1795. Inga Clendinnen portrays Bennelong as a broken man from the time of his return to New South Wales until his death in 1813. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 264-272.

¹²⁴ 'Il me parut conserver le souvenir de plusieurs personnes qu'il avait connues en angleterre, il but à la santé de Lady Dundas et aurait volontiers porté la sonté de toutes les dames anglaises, si j'avais été disposé à lui faire verser à boire'. Milius, *Recit du Voyage*, 49.

amusements of native peoples.¹²⁶ He observed that it was often striking to the European that despite the poverty of savage life ‘people with scarcely a subsistence [concern] themselves with their pleasures’, though he imagined these to be fairly limited, for the majority of his examples concern music.¹²⁷ So as soon as the opportunity arose Baudin’s men tested the Aboriginal ear.

Upon their arrival in Tasmania the men of the *Naturaliste* and the *Géographe* had a very friendly welcome from a local family. After discovering their huts the French were then invited by the hospitable Tasmanians to share their meal, which they found ‘succulent and well flavoured’. While their hosts enjoyed their tasty repast ‘the idea of treating them with a little music entered [the explorers’] heads’ but ‘not so much to amuse them, as to see what effect [their] singing would have on [their] audience’.¹²⁸ After some discussion the explorers decided to sing a spirited rendition of *La Marseillaise*, because, even though it had been ‘so unhappily prostituted during the revolution’, Péron considered that it was so full of enthusiasm that it was the tune most likely to ‘produce effect’. When the amateur choristers began they noted that the Tasmanians reacted straight away, by abandoning their meals and lending ‘an attentive ear’. As the song progressed the Tasmanians responded with a range of ‘divers contortions and so many odd gestures’, that the Frenchmen could barely contain their laughter, though appreciated the hearty approval of their efforts. The Aboriginal men let out an ‘exclamation of admiration’ whenever there was a pause in the singing, and one man animatedly danced to their song and ‘shouted with pleasure at the end of every verse’.¹²⁹

Through this rousing rendition the Frenchmen discovered one of the Tasmanians’ enjoyments, as requested by de Gérando, but were unable to ‘penetrate the ideas of them’.¹³⁰ Péron had no explanation for why his audience

¹²⁵ ‘Mr Banedou renouvela si fréquemment ses visites, qu’elles finirent par m’importuner. Je fus obligé, différentes fois, de le mettre à la porte.’ Milius, *Recit du Voyage*, 49.

¹²⁶ His list of their imagined ‘arts of amusement’ is rather brief and chaste, encompassing ‘songs and musical instruments’, poetry, an appreciation of ‘perfect harmony’, and ‘luxuries which are sometimes so extraordinary’. De Gérando, *Observation*, 97-8.

¹²⁷ De Gérando, *Observation*, 97-8.

¹²⁸ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 177.

¹²⁹ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 177.

¹³⁰ De Gérando, *Observation*, 98.

reacted the way they did for their actions were too perplexing. However, strangest of all was their subdued indifference to the Frenchmen's next serenade. The explorers decided to regale them with some 'tender airs' and though they thought that the 'savages seemed to comprehend the sense of these' they barely responded, leading Péron to presume that 'sounds of this kind did not much affect them'.¹³¹ While it is evidently impossible to recover the significance of ballads in pre-colonial indigenous Tasmanian society, it is also difficult to deduce the reality of their reaction. Péron was so taken with their vociferous response to their version of *La Marseillaise* that perhaps no subsequent reaction could satisfy his new desire for affirmation. If this was the case, Péron could only be grateful that he did not receive the same response d'Entrecasteaux's men had two decades earlier.

Alexandre-François La Fresnaye de Saint-Aignan, the newly appointed *capitaine de vaisseau* on the *Recherche*, decided to play his violin for the Tasmanians since they did not appear to have any musical instruments of their own, and he had previously an incredibly enthusiastic response to his playing from the islanders at Bouka. However, when he began to play they repeatedly gestured for him to stop, miming that the noise was hurting their ears. Labillardière dryly observed that the musician's 'self-love was truly mortified, at the indifference shown to his performance here'.¹³² Although he seemingly dismissed Saint-Aignan's recital as 'some noisy tunes', he did comment that 'Savages, in general, are not very sensible to the tones of the stringed instruments', a claim supported by Jacques-Malo la Motte du Portail, though d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau posited that they were generally afraid of loud noises, or anything that 'has too violent an effect upon their senses'.¹³³ He had already noticed that the Tasmanians had been frightened by the sound of gunpowder

¹³¹ Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 178.

¹³² Labillardière, *Voyage*, 302-3.

¹³³ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 302-3. La Motte du Portail thought that their ears were 'not susceptible to sound as are ours'. Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, 'Journal of La Motte Du Portail (*Espérance*)', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 302. D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting', 281.

explosions after he lit some in an oyster shell to gauge their reactions.¹³⁴ However, Saint-Aignan was not so easily dissuaded.

The Frenchman realised that the Tasmanians had ‘little taste for the violin’, but ‘flattered [himself] that they would not be altogether so insensible to its tones if lively tunes, and very distinct in their measure, were played’.¹³⁵ This time the Tasmanians waited before reacting, inciting Saint-Aignan to ‘redouble his exertions, in hopes of obtaining their applause’, but unfortunately it was not forthcoming. Finally his audience delivered their judgement: ‘the whole assembly stopp[ed] their ears with their fingers, that they might hear no more’.¹³⁶ The poor musician, so dejected by their reaction, dropped his bow from his hand mid-song, a fact that Labillardière, unlike his fellow observers, made sure to document for posterity. The Frenchmen’s dignity was restored, however, when the Tasmanians ‘seemed to listen ... with pleasure’ to their singing, and even accompanied them, ‘but very softly’.¹³⁷ Again, it is difficult to interpret the Tasmanian’s reaction to the violin, for though all of the explorers posited that they did not like the sound of the musical instrument, Labillardière’s ambivalent comments suggest that neither did all of the Europeans.

The British also suffered a lukewarm response to their musical performances. The local Aboriginal people had been very reluctant to enter the confines of the Port Jackson colony, so the first time some of them voluntarily visited the settlement it was cause for much excitement. The governor gave the two guests some presents and ‘did every thing that he thought might Induce them to stay, or come again and bri[n]g their Companions’.¹³⁸ One of the incitements was to regale them with a musical rendition: the ‘Drum was beat before them’ but this appeared to terrify them ‘exceedingly’. The surgeon George Worgan did, however, notice that they seemed to like the fife, though

¹³⁴ D’Hesmivy d’Auribeau, ‘D’Hesmivy d’Auribeau’s first meeting’, 279-80.

¹³⁵ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 308.

¹³⁶ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 308.

¹³⁷ La Motte du Portail, ‘Journal’, 302, and Joseph Raoul, ‘Extracts from the journal of Joseph Raoul, Second pilot on the *Recherche*, for 1793’, in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d’Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 306.

only for '2 or 3 minutes'. Their distaste for the drum is not unexpected for it must have been alarming and perhaps even deliberately so.¹³⁹ The British were perturbed by the Aborigines' apparent indifference to all of the things that the eager hosts hoped to dazzle them with. Worgan complained that the 'Objects which must have been entirely new to them did not excite their Curiosity or Astonishment so much as one might have expected'.¹⁴⁰ Indeed it was the sound of the drum which Worgan suggests released them from their complacency. Despite the uncertainty over their reaction, the surgeon still posited that 'Music of any kind [did] not attract their attention', for their only reaction which he had observed was their sometimes making a 'grunting Noise by way of keeping Time to the Tune'.¹⁴¹ However, deciphering the Aborigines' sense of hearing was only of secondary interest to the explorers, for de Gérando had instructed them to take the most care in observing their sense of sight, which was 'the most important'.¹⁴²

The only sense which Dampier had described was the New Hollanders' eyesight. He claimed that 'Their Eye-lids [were] always half closed, to keep the Flies out of their Eyes...[and that] they never open[ed] their Eyes as other People, and therefore [could not] see far unless they h[e]ld up their Heads, as if they were looking at something over them'.¹⁴³ This observation was quickly dismissed by Tench who posited that their visual acuity was 'far from being defective, as the author mention[ed] those of the inhabitants of the western side of the continent to be', and insisted that their eyes were 'remarkably quick and piercing'.¹⁴⁴ He did admit that their eyesight grew weak at a comparatively younger age, however, because of the 'almost perpetual strain in which the optic

¹³⁸ Worgan, *Journal*, 19.

¹³⁹ Though the shrill sound of the fife would also have been startling: perhaps their dislike of the drum was because it was reminiscent of gunfire?

¹⁴⁰ Worgan, *Journal*, 19.

¹⁴¹ Worgan, *Journal*, 19.

¹⁴² De Gérando, *Observation*, 82.

¹⁴³ Dampier, *New Voyage*, 218.

¹⁴⁴ Tench, 1788, 52.

nerve [was] kept, by looking out for prey'.¹⁴⁵ But the general consensus amongst the explorers was that their vision was 'particularly fine'.¹⁴⁶

Hunter was astounded not only by the accuracy of the Aboriginal men's sight, for he noticed that they 'seldom miss their aim' when spearing fish, but also in the strategies they had developed to enhance their vision. He observed that they sometimes saw men 'lying across their canoe[s]' with their face under the water so that they could see the fish clearly, without 'the tremulous motion of the surface, occasioned by every light air of wind' obscuring the location of their prey.¹⁴⁷ Collins claimed that 'their existence very often depend[ed] upon the accuracy' of their vision, but not so they could nourish themselves, but because of their martial practices. Recognising the importance of the art of spear dodging, both in the execution of their laws and in terms of masculine prestige in their ceremonies, he contended that 'a very short-sighted man (a misfortune unknown to them ...) would never be able to defend himself from their spears, which [were] thrown with amazing force and velocity'.¹⁴⁸ Yet, as in their documentation of the indigenes' other senses, the explorers could not simply remain bystanders in their observations of Aboriginal vision, and were disconcerted to find themselves subject to the Aboriginal men's gaze.

The d'Entrecasteaux expedition's first extensive encounter with the Tasmanians was a very friendly affair. On the morning of the 8th of February 1793 Labillardière, accompanied by the gardener Félix de La Haye and two sailors set off by foot on a two day excursion towards Port D'Entrecasteaux.¹⁴⁹ Even though the journey was a taxing slow march through the 'close and marshy thickets' the men still enjoyed their foray. On the first evening they slept out in the open, but were dismayed to discover the next morning that they had been watched by some Tasmanian men while they slept. However, after realising that the men had friendly intentions, they spent a few enjoyable hours

¹⁴⁵ Trench, 1788, 245.

¹⁴⁶ Collins, *Account*, 459.

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 63.

¹⁴⁸ Collins, *Account*, 459.

¹⁴⁹ Labillardière uses the name Port Dentrecasteaux to refer to the D'Entrecasteaux Channel which separates Bruny Island from the south-eastern Tasmanian coast. This channel had been

with this group, attempting to learn some of their language and observe their customs.

Despite the convivial atmosphere the Frenchmen regretfully remembered that their ships were awaiting them, so began to bid their *adieux*. However, their hosts had other plans, and after collecting their weapons from where they had been hidden, the men and some of the youths, accompanied their guests back towards the coast. During their walk, however, Labillardière soon became aware of their keen attentiveness: the men walked slowly enough for the sailors to keep apace while marching through the unfamiliar environment and regularly paused for breaks. Realising that the Tasmanians witnessed the Europeans' inferior stamina and dexterity in negotiating the rough terrain, the explorers attempted to defend their masculine pride by protesting that such tender assistance was unnecessary. However, the Tasmanians ignored their attempts to shrug them off and squirm out from under their gaze, and continued to clear branches from the strangers' path. Some even took hold of the Frenchmen by the arm whenever it looked as though they might stumble on the slippery dry grass. Realising his protests went unheeded Labillardière eventually succumbed to the 'obliging attention' and accepted their assistance, especially when the Tasmanians corrected their misguided navigation through the forest back to the harbour.¹⁵⁰ The Frenchmen were eventually able to accept the Aboriginal gaze and even profit by it; the British on the other hand found this near impossible, so their similar experience of having their physical inferiorities patently observed was much more humiliating.

With the benefit of hindsight Tench was able to admit his embarrassing and futile expedition into the interior with two Aboriginal guides, Colbee and Boladeree, recognising that it 'was more amusing in ... detail, than any other'.¹⁵¹ This party of 21, including the Governor, set out to discover whether the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers were the same, and departed Rose Hill on the 11th April 1791. After two miles the terrain quickly degenerated into 'steep,

discovered during their earlier visit to the region in May 1792. Labillardière, *Voyage*, 293. See also Edward and Maryse Duyker, 'Introduction', in d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, xxvii.

¹⁵⁰ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 301.

¹⁵¹ Tench, 1788, 185.

barren rocks' which dramatically slowed their progress as they clambered over seven miles under the 40 pound weight of their packs. In contrast to the Britons' struggle, the two guides 'walked stoutly, appeared but little fatigued, and maintained their spirits admirably'. Further, much to the chagrin of the explorers Colbee and Boladeree also laughed mercilessly whenever they saw the Europeans trip or stumble, 'misfortunes' which according to Tench 'much seldomer fell to their lot than to ours'.¹⁵²

The next day their travails worsened for they now had to negotiate the muddy banks of the river lined with stinging nettles. While the explorers struggled through these obstacles the guides 'wound through them with ease', and continued to observe and comment on their companions' difficulties with 'merriment and derision'.¹⁵³ The Britons' frustration and humiliation at their visible inferiority led them to verbally lash out at the mocking Aborigines, who would retort 'in a moment by calling him by every opprobrious name which their language afford[ed]'.¹⁵⁴ Their labours continued and finally on the 16th the party 'resolved to abandon [their] pursuit and to return home'. Upon their arrival back at Rose Hill a boat was due to depart for Sydney, and though the Governor and his party planned to go the next day, 'Colbee and Boladeree would not wait ... but insisted on going down immediately'. Their intention was to 'communicate to Baneelon and the rest of their countrymen the novelties they had seen'.¹⁵⁵

While Tench's syntax suggests that their tales would comprise descriptions of the new country they saw, it is just as likely that the two comedians might have been eager to report the failings of their fellow travellers. Perhaps they had even given the party a preview of the performance they might put on for Bennelong and the others, for during the expedition the two had impersonated the Europeans' feeble efforts. A few days earlier Tench noted that while their fatigue had increased, their 'two sable companions seemed rather enlivened than exhausted by it'. During their breaks the two men would 'play

¹⁵² Tench, 1788, 187.

¹⁵³ Tench, 1788, 190.

¹⁵⁴ Tench, 1788, 190.

¹⁵⁵ Tench, 1788, 198.

ten thousand tricks and gambols', but their main source of fun was derived from the explorers' 'misfortunes, in tumbling amidst nettles, and sliding down precipices, which they mimicked with inimitable drollery'.¹⁵⁶ In contrast to Labillardière's benevolent guides, Tench's description of Colbee and Boladeree illustrates that, evidently, the Aboriginal gaze could be just as merciless and disdainful as the western gaze.

v. conclusion

For the eighteenth-century European the face was loaded with significance, revealing one's character, morality, passions and experience. Consequently they had developed methods and sciences intended to lay bare its secrets such as pathognomy and physiognomy. The explorers were primed with these various discourses on the face and attempted to read in the Aboriginal men's visages signs of their racial affinities with African peoples, their innate characters, and the acuity of their senses. The face was also a site for Aboriginal cultural practices which the explorers could investigate as evidence of their societal structures in terms of age, gender, and status, engagement with the arcane realm, and even just their decorative crafts. However though the explorers examined the men's faces for what they revealed about the Aborigines, they were unprepared to receive what the men's faces would reflect about themselves; the Europeans soon realised that they were objects of indigenous enquiry, sympathy, and most disconcertingly, derision and mirth. Yet despite these discomforts studying the Aboriginal face was largely a removed practice, an act of observation rather than engagement. It would be their explorations of the Aboriginal tongue which would force the Europeans to interact with and attempt to understand Aboriginal people.

¹⁵⁶ Tench, 1788, 192.

TONGUE

i. the slippery native tongue

Of all the parts of the indigenous male body that the Europeans studied and documented, the most potentially useful yet difficult one to acquire an extensive knowledge of was the slippery native tongue. This fleshy little organ inspired great interest and concern amongst the European philosophers because of its transgressive and ambivalent nature. While the physical likeness of the ‘little member’ to that other more infamous *member* was enough to inspire trepidation, the real anxieties about the tongue were founded on its seemingly unruly independence.¹ For instance, seventeenth-century anatomist John Bulwer commented that unlike its surrounding facial features such as the lips, nostrils, cheeks, and eyes it ‘hath no fellow’.² Early modernist Carla Mazzio also argues that this autonomous little organ is unique in its ability to escape beyond the borders of the body at will, threatening to disrupt the cohesive integrity of the classical body and betray the body as grotesque.³ Even the way it moved, ‘advancing and retiring in every direction’ transgressed the body’s usual kinaesthetics.⁴

¹ James 3:5, Carla Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, in David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (eds.) *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, Routledge, New York and London, 1997, 56.

² John Bulwer, *Pathomyatomia or a Dissection of the Significantive muscles of the Affections of the Mind*, London, 1649, 232, cited in Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, 56.

³ Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, 56.

⁴ Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalum*, W. Ogle (trans.), London, 1882, 53, cited in Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, 56.

This physical ability to ‘pull in two directions at once’ echoed the tongue’s integral ambivalence, a source for much theological and philosophical rumination.⁵ For example, Christian doctrine ordained it with power over both ‘death and life’, and in the sixteenth century Erasmus also expounded on the tongue’s contradictory nature when he stated that ‘It is Eris, rouser of quarrels, but the same tongue is Grace, who wins good will’.⁶ These discourses reflect the tongue’s primary attribute, for while it also allows taste and assists in chewing and swallowing, its prominent function for man is enabling speech.

The tongue’s connection with speech is so entrenched that until the nineteenth century the word tongue was also commonly used to define a nation’s language.⁷ The term, then, according to Mazzio, ‘encodes a relation between word and flesh’,⁸ illustrating that language, which has increasingly become conceived as the discarnate and arbitrary assignation of words to ideas, has its roots in the body.⁹ Michèle Cohen argues that unlike the French (*langue*) and Italian (*lingua*) English speakers have abandoned the word ‘tongue’ in favour of the abstract term ‘language’ because we find it too confronting: ‘the tongue is inescapably embedded in its materiality, with all the ambiguities – especially sexual – this entails’.¹⁰

Yet the eighteenth-century European explorers did not shy away from the corporeal dimension of language and communication in their accounts of Indigenous Australian men, in fact we will see that communication between the European explorers and the Aboriginal men was an embodied practice. The body figured in their discussion of indigenous communication ranging from their explanations of Aboriginal utterances, to determining the shape of the

⁵ Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, 53.

⁶ Proverbs 18:21, and Erasmus, ‘Lingua’, Elaine Fantham (trans.), in Elaine Fantahm and Erika Rummel (eds.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 365, cited in Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, 71, n. 1.

⁷ Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National identity and language in the eighteenth century*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996. 1-2.

⁸ Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, 54.

⁹ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*, 2. Paxman provides a nice example of the pitfalls of translating embodied meanings and communication into an arbitrary and conventional written text. David Paxman, “‘Distance Getting Close’: Gesture, Language, and Space in the Pacific”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2002. 78-81.

¹⁰ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*, 2.

lexicons they constructed. But the corporeal focus was even more immediate, with communication being conducted through the body via gestural language, and advances in verbal communication only enabled by the capture and incarceration of the indigenous body. This chapter will explore the verbal and non-verbal intercourse between the European explorers and Aboriginal men, to reveal the culture clash that occurred in these early cross-cultural communications and European attempts to apprehend the slippery native tongues.

ii. embodied communication

Initially, the native tongues were perceived as incomprehensible and ‘guttural’, especially the men’s utterances, which contrasted with the women’s ‘pleasingly soft and feminine’ tones.¹¹ Dampier made the most explicit association of language with the body when he said that the Aboriginal people ‘speak somewhat through the throat’.¹² Before the indigenous languages became familiar to the European ear they were considered as little more than crude noises. Watkin Tench recalled that they ‘were at first inclined to stigmatise this language as harsh and barbarous in its sounds. Their combinations of words and the manner they utter[ed] them frequently convey[ed] such an effect’.¹³ But once this noise was domesticated and the individual words were discerned (for most Europeans found the rapidity of Aboriginal speech difficult to

¹¹ Nicolas Baudin. *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*. Christine Cornell (trans.). Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, repr. in N. J. B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1983, 113; and Watkin Tench, *1788: Comprising 'A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay' and 'A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson'*, Tim Flannery (ed.), The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793], 56. First Fleet surgeon John Worgan describes the Port Jackson language as ‘an inarticulate, unintelligible Jargon’. John Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon*, Library Council of New South Wales, Sydney, 1978, 19, and Lieutenant Bradley describes the men’s voices as ‘harsh’. William Bradley, *A Voyage to New South Wales: The Journal of Lieutenant William Bradley RN of the HMS Sirius 1786-1792*, [facsimile], Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1969. Tench described the women’s voices. Tench, *1788*, 56. Bradley asserts that the women’s voices had a ‘pleasing softness’. Bradley, *A Voyage*, 73.

¹² William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World: The Journal of a Buccaneer*, Mark Becken (ed.), Hummingbird Press, London, 1998 [1697], 221.

¹³ Tench, *1788*, 265.

apprehend).¹⁴ Tench admitted that their words sounded ‘mellifluous’ and ‘sonorous’.¹⁵ With the passion of a recent convert he rhetorically asked ‘What ear can object to the names of Còlbee (pronounced exactly as Colby is with us), Bèreewan, Bòndel, Imèerawanyee, Deedòra, Wòlarawaree, or Bàneelon, among the men; or to Wereewèea, Gòoreedeeana, Milba, or Matilba among the women’?¹⁶

The natural body, when considered in its essential state, stripped of its cultural and material embellishments, and reduced to needs and drives, was all that the native and newcomer held in common, so it is not surprising that the influence of the body was also apparent in the Europeans’ attempts to acquire the indigenous languages. The word lists they assembled largely consisted of simple nouns, many of which denoted body parts, and verbs which almost exclusively concerned human actions. One of the first lexicons compiled was by Joseph Banks from his stay at the Endeavour River in 1770. This list consisted of a mere 38 words (including four he left undefined), of which 20 words pertained to the human body.¹⁷ Even 33 years later the vocabularies compiled

¹⁴ First Fleet surgeon John Worgan dismisses the Aborigines’ speech as inarticulate chatter, allowing him to ignore their admonishments: ‘Some of the Natives came down to Day both on the South & North Sides of the Bay, and behaved very funny and friendly, they expressed a little Anger at seeing us cut down the Trees, but it was only by jabbering very fast & loud’. Worgan, *Journal*, 28. For other accounts on the incomprehensible rapidity of Aboriginal speech see David Samwell, ‘Some Account of A Voyage to South Sea’s In 1776-1777-1776’, in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Vol.3, Part II, 994; William Ellis, *An authentic narrative of a voyage performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke, in His Majesty’s Ships Resolution and Discovery, during the years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*, G. Robinson, Pater-noster Row: J. Sewell, Cornhill; and J. Debrett, Piccadilly, London, 1782, 18; and François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 70.

¹⁵ Tench, 1788, 265. Tench describes the Aboriginal man Arabanoo’s voice as ‘soft and musical, when its tone could be heard’. Tench, 1788,96. Collins concurs stating that ‘Their language is extremely grateful to the ear, being in many instances expressive and sonorous’. David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Brian Fletcher (ed.), A.H & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1975, 506. Cook had earlier said that their ‘Voices are soft and tunable’. Cook, Vol. 1, 395.

¹⁶ Tench, 1788, 265.

¹⁷ The indigenous people of Endeavour River were the Kokoimudji people, and Banks recorded their word for tongue as *unjar*. Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey*, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 111-2. Of the nine categories that Collins compartmentalises his vocabulary into, ‘Parts of the Human Body’ is the third that he lists, though is not his most extensive. Collins, *An Account*, 508.

by the British were still peppered with body parts, as the majority of Matthew Flinders' Caledon Bay lexicon consisted of either nouns or verbs which related to the body.¹⁸

François Péron's Tasmanian vocabulary indicated that the same methodology was employed by the French as well. On the 22nd of February 1802, three days after arriving, Péron attempted to collect some of the local idiom after meeting a friendly group of men from Oyster Bay. His inexperienced methodology consisted of using some words from the languages spoken at Dentrecaesteaux Channel, with the 'aid of gesture', yet achieved surprising results, for the Aboriginal men 'acquired the meaning with a degree of sagacity which astonished [him] much'.¹⁹ Thankfully Péron did not detail the gestures he used in his interviews as his vocabulary reveals a certain scatological interest: 'I successively obtained as answer to the words yawning, laughing, weeping, whistling, blowing, tying, untying, burning, spitting, making water, going to stool, breaking wind, striking a blow, wrestling, tearing, strangling, &c. &c'.²⁰

Péron's focus on the body was perhaps considered too prurient for his general reader as Norman Plomley has noted the variations in this narrative between the different editions of *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres Australes*. The first French edition (Volume 1 published in 1807) does not include the references to 'making water, going to stool [and] breaking wind' that we see in the 1809 English translation cited above, but are included in the second French edition (1824) along with the term for having 'an erection',²¹ a noticeable omission from the English translation. Plomley postulates prudery as a reason for these editorial incursions, but an interesting question is why Péron selected these particular words for inclusion in his narrative, and did not simply sequester them to the anonymity of '&c. &c'?

¹⁸ According to Tindale the indigenous people of Caledon Bay were the Balamumu people. Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, G&W Nicol, Pall Mall. 1814, 215.

¹⁹ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 218.

²⁰ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 218.

²¹ N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines*, Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1983, 75, n. 15.

A vocabulary, compiled from both the Baudin and the earlier d'Entrecasteaux expeditions and included as a footnote in the original French edition, reveals that Péron had greater access to the Tasmanian tongue than the above narrative suggests, for it includes a range of words which bear no relationship to the body and were of more practical use for communicating their day to day needs to the Tasmanian natives. Is the prurience of Péron's record, in contrast to that of his antecedent, d'Entrecasteaux's botanist Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière, a consequence of his own carnal interests or an example of a bawdy cross-cultural exchange between men? Péron stated that the Oyster Bay men quickly 'conceived the meaning of [his] gestures',²² and the entire interview was conducted amidst much hearty laughter. Perhaps this shared laughter was to some extent levelling, comparable to what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as 'carnival laughter', which 'is universal in its scope; ... directed at all and everyone'.²³

Laughter allowed for a momentary lapse in both the Tasmanians' defensive wariness towards the French interlopers, and the Frenchmen's obsession with cultural and racial differences, revealing that all were just men; albeit, men who found the eliminations of the natural body very amusing. Bakhtin reminds us that 'we must not forget that urine (as well as dung) is gay matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter'.²⁴ But he is not alone in noticing this transformative significance of bodily functions. Historian Simon Dickie notes that scatological tales were a common inclusion in jest books, because they incite 'mirth and good humour', and Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacobs also contend that an interest in the 'gross and the bodily' was a common part of the male bonding experience in eighteenth-century Britain.²⁵ So I consider this exchange between Péron and the Tasmanians to be an example of the utility of the body in facilitating amicable

²² Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 219.

²³ Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Helene Iswolsky (trans.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington Indiana, 1984, 11.

²⁴ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 335.

²⁵ Simon Dickie, 'Hilarity and Pitilessness in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: English Jestbook Humor', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2003, 8; and Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, 'The Affective Revolution in 1790s Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2001, 491-496.

exchanges. In contrast to the Europeans' obsession with the Aborigines' physical differences described in previous chapters, in this instance the shared humiliations of the natural body provided a common ground between indigene and interloper, enabling convivial conversation in what was a rare example of camaraderie.

Péron's interview reveals another crucial intersection between the body and language: his use of gesture illustrated that cross-cultural communication was conducted through the body, that is, by using the aforementioned gestures, but also through making signs, and gauging demeanour. While these physical acts were generally the only means of communication the European and Aboriginal men had, given that they did not share a common tongue, gestures and signs were not merely used as a last resort. According to David Paxman, throughout the eighteenth century elaborate positivist theories on gesture and natural language were formulated by the likes of John Bulwer, Bernard Mandeville, and the Abbé de Condillac, and it is evident that these ideas implicitly influenced the explorers' interactions with the Aboriginal men and how they interpreted the indigenous tongues.²⁶ Joseph-Marie de Gérando, in his instructions to Baudin's naturalists, invoked an idea of a natural language in his recommendations on how to communicate with indigenous peoples. He blithely stated:

Since the articulate language of savage peoples, according to the information which we have about it, is composed of signs almost as arbitrary and conventional as our own, it is clear that to establish an initial intercourse with them, we need to go back to signs which are closest to nature; with them, as with children, we must begin with the language of action.²⁷

By examining the accounts it appears that the use of signs and gestures did to some extent facilitate communication between the European explorer and indigenous informant. For example Labillardière described a gestural conversation that he had conducted with a Tasmanian:

²⁶ David Paxman, "'Distance Getting Close': Gesture, Language, and Space in the Pacific", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2002.

²⁷ Joseph-Marie de Gérando, *The Observation of Savage Peoples*, F.C.T. Moore (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969, 71.

One of the savages informed us by unequivocal signs, that he had come to reconnoitre us during the night. That we might understand he had seen us asleep, he inclined his head on one side, laying it on the palm of his right hand, and closing his eyes; and with the other he pointed out the spot, where we had passed the night. He then acquainted us, by signs equally expressive, that he was at the same time on the other side of the brook, whence he observed us.²⁸

These mimes and gestures appear entirely comprehensible, so the reader may take for granted that Labillardière correctly interpreted them, and hence cross-cultural communication was achieved through the 'language of action'. However, these mimes and gestures can only be interpreted as meaningful and comprehensible signs when they fulfil the expectations of the interpreter. In this instance the claim that the Tasmanian had spied on the Frenchmen while they slept was not unexpected, for it confirmed French suspicions aroused by one of the explorers who was 'awakened about the middle of the night by a rustling among the branches'.²⁹ Another in the French party told Labillardière that he had also previously suspected that the Tasmanians were close by because at sunset the night before he had 'perceived some smoke on the other side of the lake' but had forgotten to inform the others.³⁰

In his study of New World first encounters *Marvelous Possessions* (1991), Stephen Greenblatt contends that signs which do not confirm the prior knowledge or expectations of the European explorer were 'demoted from the status of sign and not noticed any longer'.³¹ While this thesis is difficult to test, because it is premised on an absence (that is, any signs that were not anticipated by the Europeans were not discerned, so left uncommunicated to both explorer and subsequently the reader), it is a compelling argument that is bolstered by looking at the obverse. In the Australian context we see that European signs and gestures which did not fulfil the expectations of the Aboriginal people were simply not recognised, hence their meanings were not communicated. For an example of this we can return to d'Entrecasteaux's sojourn in Tasmania.

²⁸ Jacques de Labillardière. *Voyage in Search of La Pérouse, performed by order of the constituent assembly, during the years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1794*, John Stockdale, Piccadilly, London, 1800, 298.

²⁹ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 298.

³⁰ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 298.

On their first visit in April and May 1792 the men of the *Recherche* and the *Espérance* had only fleeting encounters with the indigenes, and it was not until their return visit in January 1793 that they finally had a meaningful exchange with them. The French were surprised to find the Tasmanians amiable and affectionate, and not at all as they had feared.³² Consequently many of the crewmates were as eager to spend as much time with the Tasmanians as possible, especially the women. Their positive encounters with the ostensible noble savages led many of the Frenchmen, irrespective of their role or background in natural history, to indulge in some amateur ethnography employing diverse methods. Labillardière described one officer who attempted to ascertain whether or not the women were ‘expert swimmers’.³³ His experiment entailed jumping into the water for a swim, and gesturing towards the women that they should join him and ‘follow his example’. However, the women did not appear to understand his gestures and did not join him in the water, and it is only because the French later witnessed the women diving for shellfish, that they realised that the women were in fact ‘expert swimmers’.³⁴ This incident reveals that the Tasmanians were oblivious to the signs and meanings communicated to them by the French, for they did not expect that one man cavorting in the water and waving his arms at them signified an invitation to both swim, and demonstrate their athleticism and means of procuring food.

To summarise we can see that de Gérando’s presumptions about the accessibility of the ‘language of action’ were naïve for two reasons. Firstly, linguists David Armstrong, William Stokoe and Sherman Wilcox consider a gesture as any ‘bodily movement to which human beings attach meaning’.³⁵

³¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonders of the New World*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, 88.

³² D’Entrecasteaux chastised himself for having entertained the notion that they were cannibals after having found human remains on his first visit: ‘Oh! How much we should blush, having suspected them last year of eating human flesh! They are interesting men in every respect, with whom I would have liked to have spent all the time we have been forced to remain at this anchorage. Bruny d’Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia and the Pacific, 1791-1793*, Edward Duyker and Maryse Duyker (trans. and eds), Melbourne University Press, Carleton South, 2001, 147.

³³ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 306.

³⁴ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 306.

³⁵ David F. Armstrong, William C. Stokoe, and Sherman E. Wilcox, *Gesture and the Nature of Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, 3.

Consequently, as demonstrated by the above examples, interpreting them can be a fraught affair because the attached meanings are either contingent upon expectations, or are culturally determined, so somewhat opaque to outsiders.³⁶ But de Gérando's confidence was not unique, as most explorers assumed that they usually understood the meanings of the Aboriginal gestures, even though these espoused meanings appeared to crudely fall into one of three broad categories: friendly, hostile, or inexplicable. For example, upon meeting a group of Tasmanian men for the first time Nicolas Baudin stated 'We could make nothing of their long speeches to us, but their signs were much more intelligible, and we understood perfectly that they were telling us to follow them to their friends across the water'.³⁷ Despite his confident appraisal of the Tasmanians' intentions, Baudin failed to discover what they were, as the Frenchmen stopped following once they realised they would have to wade waist-deep through a channel.

Secondly, because gestures can be so subtle as to appear as 'nothing but physical features; for example, the look of the movement a hand and arm make', it can not be assumed that the explorers even recognised all of the gestures that the Aboriginal men communicated to them.³⁸ Of course we have no access to the imperceptible gestures communicated by the Aboriginal men, because they would not have been documented, but considering this option may shed light on some of the seemingly sudden and mercurial responses of the Aboriginal men to European actions, especially those considered hostile. However, despite the difficulties inherent in gestural language, it was perceived as a necessary intermediary for the greater ambition of acquiring the indigenous tongues.

iii. their language was entirely new to us

A common aim for all of the early European explorers was to document as much about the indigenous Australian languages as possible: how the utterances were articulated, the way they sounded to the ear, vocabularies of the different

³⁶ Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*, 89.

³⁷ Baudin, *The Journal*, 303.

³⁸ Armstrong, Stokoe, and Wilcox, *Gesture*, 2.

peoples, the basic grammatical structures, and the connections between the indigenous groups (both within Australia and without) that the languages revealed. Some knowledge of the local idiom proved advantageous to the practical requirements of the navigators' routine, such as finding water and other essential resources, eliciting trade, and fostering amicable relations with potentially hostile natives. Deciphering indigenous languages could also bring kudos to the learned naturalists who embarked on these voyages. Each voyage contributed to the assembling of Aboriginal vocabularies, with some protagonists ardently correcting any lexical errors made by earlier explorers.

Languages could also be the key to unlocking the secret of how people had first colonised these distant lands, suggesting where the indigenous people originated from. These linguistic ambitions were impossible to achieve within the exploration context, as acquiring a language requires more time, focus, and amity than the explorers could reasonably expect, especially considering that they were at the mercy of the elements.³⁹ Yet, most of the explorers did not recognise the difficulties that they would face. Greenblatt blames this naïvety on the fabulous tales of earlier writers. He states:

It is characteristic of Mandeville that he never registers the problems of cross-cultural communication. He claims to speak with Saracens, Jews, Armenians, Copts, Chaldeans, Indians, Tibetans, and the likes with unmediated fluency. ... Mandeville's dialogues are only possible with imaginary others.⁴⁰

These fabulous narratives obscured the frustrating intricacies of cross-cultural communication and led some explorers to assume that all they needed were a few baubles and gifts to tantalize the natives, hands to gesture with, and a handful of words from any savage language.⁴¹

³⁹ Staum for example states that the de Gérando's methodology could not compete with the political and strategic aims of the voyage, or the time constraints dictated by seasonal changes. Fleurieu warned Baudin that 'The monsoons are in control, and a few too many days spent on one call may condemn him to six months of inactivity'. Christine Cornell, *The Journal of Post-Captain Baudin*, 5, cited in Martin S. Staum, 'Human Geography in the French Institute: New Discipline or Missed Opportunity?', *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 23, Oct. 1987, 336.

⁴⁰ Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*, 91.

⁴¹ Gift giving was a crucial element in eliciting communication with indigenous peoples, and many explorers arrived on new shores laden with what they describes as baubles, trifles,

Accordingly, the linguistic frontier of those early encounters between Europeans and Aboriginal people was rather cosmopolitan. The first Europeans to visit the local shores knew nothing of the languages at all, and even subsequent expeditions armed with vocabularies compiled by their predecessors, still made little headway in conversing with their indigenous interlocutors. This was largely a consequence of the proliferation of Aboriginal tongues: it is widely accepted that over 600 dialects constituting some 250-270 discrete languages were spoken throughout pre-colonial Australia.⁴² As the late eighteenth-century expeditions mostly sojourned in different locations along the coast, encountering diverse Aboriginal nations, these vocabularies were generally useless in enabling the explorers to strike up any conversation.⁴³ So in some instances, the Europeans resorted to shouting out any words they knew from their travels, in the hope that their interlocutors might comprehend something of their meaning. From the accounts it is evident that other than the Europeans' native English and French, and the numerous Aboriginal languages spoken, words from nations as disparate as Tahiti, New Zealand, Portugal, Greece, Malabar, and Mozambique were all combined to produce a lexical soup.

Two of Cook's expeditions encountered indigenes on the Australian shores, and each time his crew happened to include a Tahitian: Tupaia on the first, and Omai on the third. Tupaia proved to be an asset in communicating with the Maori of New Zealand, leading the English to hope that he would inaugurate communication between them and all other 'Indians', but unfortunately he contributed little to the verbal exchanges with the Aboriginal people of either Botany Bay or Endeavour River. Upon their arrival at Botany

trinkets, and *pacotillage*. According to John Patrick Greene these descriptors of trade goods reveal the European expectations of, and attitude towards, the indigenous peoples, that is that they would be ignorant, or childlike. As such, gift-giving will be discussed in chapter 9 'Childlike Bodies'. John Patrick Greene, 'French Encounters with Material Culture of the South Pacific', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Fall 2002, 225-245.

⁴² Colin Yallop, *Australian Aboriginal Languages*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1982; Annette Schmidt, *The Loss of Australia's Aboriginal Language Heritage*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1990; and Graham McKay, *The Land Still Speaks: Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maintenance and development Needs and Activities*, Australian Government Publishing Services, Canberra, 1996.

⁴³ D'Entrecasteaux illustrates this: 'But we must infer that the language of the inhabitants of this part of the coast is very different to the one used by the natives seen by Captain Cook at Adventure Bay, since we found nothing in common between the words of our vocabulary and

Bay Cook noted that ‘neither us nor Tupia [sic] could understand one word they said’, and the Tahitian’s interactions with the Endeavour River Aborigines was no more intimate than that of the British, for he also relied on physical signs and gestures, such as invitations to sit and eat.⁴⁴ Similarly Omai did not understand a word of the Tasmanian languages, and when the English ‘address’d them in two or three words of the South Sea Islands’ the Tasmanians did not comprehend any of them.⁴⁵

That the crew of Cook’s third expedition even entertained the notion that the Tasmanians shared a uniform regional Pacific language is surprising, considering that both Cook and Banks had dismissed any etymological kinship between these and the Aboriginal languages eight years earlier. Banks simply stated that the Aboriginal ‘language was totally different from that of the Islanders’,⁴⁶ while Cook speculated on why the languages were different. Ever the rationalist, Cook suspected that the absence of the useful coconut tree in New Holland indicated that there was no trade between Aboriginal and Islander neighbours, so deduced that ‘they [were] a different people and sp[o]ke a different Language’.⁴⁷ But Anderson defended his use of South Sea Island words, arguing that there could be a common tongue since the Tasmanians physically resembled the Tanna and Malicola islanders, hence their racialised corporeality should have determined their language. However, his favoured evidence to substantiate his claim that the two peoples share a common ancestor, is *his* observation of the startling similarity between the Tasmanian, Maori and Tahitian languages, even though this hypothesis is derived from an admittedly small sample. Anderson claimed that ‘of only about six or seven words which we could get from them one which expresses cold differs little from that of New Zealand and Otaheite, the first being Malla’reede, the second

the words having the same meaning in Mr Anderson’s’. D’Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia*, 148.

⁴⁴ James Cook. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1955. Vol. 1, 305. See also Banks, *Australian Journey*, 23 and 62.

⁴⁵ Samwell, ‘Some Account’, 994 and Anderson, ‘A Journal’, 784.

⁴⁶ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 64.

⁴⁷ Cook, *Journals*, Vol. 1, 397-8.

Makka'reede and the third Ma'reede'.⁴⁸ Sensing the opprobrium he could receive for the scant empirical evidence supporting his claim,⁴⁹ Anderson petulantly added in a footnote:

It might I think be easily prov'd that though the agreement of the Languages of two nations may be assum'd as a strong argument for their having been deriv'd from the same stock, that the disagreement of the Languages of two or more Nations is by no means a proof of the contrary, as we have innumerable instances of people inhabiting the same island having not only different dialects but Languages that have not the least affinity &c.⁵⁰

So we see that words from other indigenous languages were spoken, and ostensibly heard, by the Europeans because these words facilitated discovering the Aborigines' geographical origins. Debates over the migration of Aboriginal people and their affinities with other indigenous antipodeans continued to be contested. For example, Labillardière found no linguistic resemblances between the spoken Tasmanian he heard and the mainland Aboriginal languages recorded by other voyagers, so argued that this 'proves that all these people have not one common origin'.⁵¹ So a firmer acquaintance with the Tasmanian languages not only ruled out any affinity with the Polynesian languages, but also those of the mainland. Indeed, any linguistic arguments on the origins of

⁴⁸ Anderson, 'A Journal', 789.

⁴⁹ After his first voyage Cook received criticism for his less than rigorous ethnographic methodology on the question of Maori cannibalism, and reflected on this censure in his second voyage: 'the account I gave of it [cannibalism] was partly founded on circumstances and was, as I afterwards found, discredited by many people. I have often been asked, after relating all the circumstance, if I had actually seen them eat human flesh my self, such a question was sufficient to convince me that they either disbelieved all I had said or formed a very different opinion from it'. Cook, *Journals*, Vol. 2, 293. Anderson would have been familiar with Cook's earlier treatment so must have anticipated the need for substantiated empirical research when he proposed his own hypotheses.

⁵⁰ Anderson, 'A Journal', fn. p. 789. Flinders concurs with Anderson's logic, although not his particular claim. In 1803 Flinders noted that even though the languages of people as disparate as Caledon Bay, King George Sound and Port Jackson were entirely different they were all still the same race. Flinders stated: 'I do not know that the language at any two parts of terra Australis, however near, has been found to be entirely the same; for even at Botany Bay, Port Jackson, and Broken Bay, not only the dialect, but many words are radically different; and this confirms one part of the observation, the truth of which seems to be generally admitted: that although similarity of language in two nations proves their origin to be the same, yet dissimilarity of language is no proof of the contrary position'. Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, G&W Nicol, Pall Mall, 1814, 213-4.

⁵¹ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 314.

Aboriginal people were predicated on a more protracted association with them than most of the explorers could afford.⁵²

However, the officers of the First Fleet were an exception to this rule, so produced the most extensive vocabularies, and the most convincing theses on the connections between the different Aboriginal languages. In 1798 the judge-advocate of the colony, David Collins, claimed that the Port Jackson tongue 'certainly ha[d] no analogy with any other known language'. He even observed lexical differences between the dialects of people separated by a distance of 'only fifty or sixty miles'.⁵³ Yet, despite Collins rationally recognising this, there were three words whose apparent similarity to European words piqued his interest, for he could not determine 'how these words came into their language'.⁵⁴

The first etymological 'mystery' he described was the similarity between *Cā-ba Cā-ba*, the name given to the Harbour's middle head, and the contemporary Portuguese word for 'head' *Cāba*;⁵⁵ the second being *Cam-marāde*, a term for affection, and the French word *Commerade*; and finally he paralleled the word *E-lee-mong* (shield) with the ancient Greek name Telamon, 'the name given to the greater Ajax [in Homer's *Iliad*], on account of his being lord of the seven-fold shield'.⁵⁶ Even though tantalised by the suggestion that these homophones illustrated an etymological relationship between these particular Aboriginal and European languages, Collins, unlike Anderson, did not claim that this did in fact prove a connection between the two peoples.

⁵² See Fleurieu's warning to Baudin in Staum, 'Human Geography', 336.

⁵³ Collins, *An Account*, 506. These distances did not necessarily preclude the Aboriginal speakers from comprehending one another though. Tench observed on an expedition west of Port Jackson that his coastal guides, Colbee and Boladeree, could communicate with the men they met even though they spoke different dialects: 'Although our natives and strangers spoke different dialects of the same language; many of the common and necessary words used in life bearing no similitude, and others being slightly different. ... It deserves a notice that all the different terms seemed to be familiar to both parties, though each in speaking preferred its own'. Tench, 1788, 194-5.

⁵⁴ Collins, *An Account*, 513.

⁵⁵ *Cāba* is the term Collins uses, the modern Portuguese word for head is *cabeça*.

⁵⁶ Collins, *An Account*, 513.

However, he did suggest that further investigation on this matter be conducted once the British became more conversant in the language.⁵⁷

Yet, by 1802 the explorers recognised that any apparent similarities between Aboriginal and foreign words were probably little more than coincidental, even if the context suggested otherwise, such as when the French post-captain Nicolas Baudin was struck by a particular word used by the Tasmanians. While the French naturalists walked along together with a Tasmanian party, after having conducted their interview, the explorers realised that the indigenous men did not want the French to continue along with them, probably because they were nearing their wives' and children's hiding spot. The men began to speak vociferously to the French, 'gesturing all the while' that they should return to their boat. Baudin noted that 'Amongst the different words they spoke, one, "Kaoué, Kaoué" kept recurring, and was even said in a tone of command'.⁵⁸ The sound of this word was familiar, and reminded Baudin of one from the Mozambique language meaning 'Go away'.⁵⁹ Given the situation and the inference he had derived from the Tasmanians' actions and demeanour, Baudin might have been tempted to claim that the two apparent homophones shared the same meaning, but reflecting his usual rational approach, Baudin simply stated that he could not 'say if it ha[d] the same meaning with the natives of Van Diemen's Land'.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, sensible to their desires, he ordered his men to stop following the Tasmanians which immediately abated the escalating hostilities.

However, not all of Baudin's crew emulated his cool deliberation. Within days of arriving at New Holland the mineralogist Louis Depuch and a party of naturalists had a nerve-wracking altercation with some Aboriginal men at Geographe Bay.⁶¹ From their boat the French heard sudden cries emanating from the forests, and realised that they were being watched. Too impatient to wait for the boat to land, Depuch, Freycinet, Leschenault, L'Haridon, and

⁵⁷ Collins, *An Account*, 513.

⁵⁸ Baudin, *The Journal*, 320.

⁵⁹ Baudin, *The Journal*, 320.

⁶⁰ Baudin, *The Journal*, 320.

⁶¹ Depuch wrote an account of this incident which he then gave to Péron for inclusion in the official journal. Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 70-74.

Heirison jumped overboard and waded to shore in the hope of meeting the natives. They stopped when they reached the edge of the forest for the atmosphere had suddenly turned ominous. By now they could no longer see the Aboriginal men, only hear them calling to each other from amongst the trees, and silencing their dog's bark.⁶²

In an attempt to placate the unseen men the Europeans deposited gifts where they stood, but then suddenly noticed seven or eight men emerge from the shadows and advance towards them. Upon deciding that a retreat was more prudent than an attack the naturalists hurried back to the safety of their compatriots, a display of apparent cowardice that incited the Aboriginal men to give chase. Despite the braggadocio of his prose and his faith in the 'superiority of [their] weapons', it is clear that Depuch was alarmed by the Aboriginal men's demonstrated hostilities, and indifference to the French conciliatory actions.⁶³ Just as the Frenchmen were readying themselves to deploy their weapons they noticed that their boat had landed and their crewmates were hurrying to their assistance. Bolstered by this martial support, and perhaps to quell his frayed nerves, Depuch adopted the role of diplomat, trying out his command of savage languages.

Firstly, he called out '*taïo, taïo!*', meaning 'friend, friend!', ostensibly 'a word well understood among most of the inhabitants of the South Sea'.⁶⁴ The advancing warrior seemed perplexed by this word, repeating it aloud to his companions 'as if to try and guess at the sense',⁶⁵ and eliciting much laughter in response. Having failed in their use of Polynesian languages the explorers then called out in French, again amusing the Aboriginal men who appeared to derisively mimic their words.⁶⁶ Finally, in a last ditch effort, one of the Frenchmen, who Depuch refrained from naming, called out a Malabar word,

⁶² The only words which the French discern in their speech are '*vélou, vélou*'. and '*mouyé! mouyé!*' which was accompanied by gestures that the French should 'retrace [their] steps'. Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 70-1.

⁶³ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 71.

⁶⁴ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 72-3.

⁶⁵ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 72.

⁶⁶ Apparently the men repeated the words with great exactness, and words they 'pronounced best, was [sic], *oui, non, viens ici, amis*, and many others'. Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 72.

pourah, meaning 'go your way; or leave us alone'.⁶⁷ Depuch betrayed his hope that this final verbal joust was successful, when he stated 'the manner in which they received this word of the Malabar language, seemed to imply that they were not so unacquainted with it as the French'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless these words also fell on deaf ears, and the Aboriginal men 'maintained the same contemptuous and martial air'.⁶⁹

This episode is the most extreme example of the cosmopolitan linguistic frontier, with French, Aboriginal, Polynesian, and Malabar all being spoken. But more importantly it reveals the difficulties and anxieties that inhered in these first-encounter attempts to communicate without the aid of a common language, because this is a rare account in which the explorers do not confidently assume that they can interpret the intentions of the Aboriginal people, and self-assuredly convey their own objectives.

iv. acquiring indigenous tongues

If, and once, amicable relations had been brokered through gift giving and the exchange of a few words, the Europeans then faced the difficult task of learning the indigenous languages: an arduous and embodied process. The anthropological agenda of the later expeditions made this an imperative, for it was believed that in order to correctly observe a people, one must be able to converse with them.⁷⁰ The Baudin expedition was the only one to be given formal directives on how to learn the indigenous languages, included in Joseph-Marie de Gérando's *Considerations on the Observation of Savage Peoples*. These instructions were explicitly detailed, beginning with his previously mentioned 'language of action or gesture', comprising the following categories ranging from least to most ambiguous: 'demonstrative signs', 'descriptive signs', and 'metaphorical signs'.⁷¹ Demonstrative signs were used to indicate

⁶⁷ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 72.

⁶⁸ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 72.

⁶⁹ Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 72. Following this the Frenchmen then approached the men carrying 'green boughs in our hands, with white handkerchiefs'. Unsurprisingly these western symbolic gestures were also ignored. Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery*, 73.

⁷⁰ De Gérando, *Observation*, 70.

⁷¹ De Gérando, *Observation*, 71.

objects which are present, hence the aforementioned focus on body parts; descriptive signs imitated the main attributes or functions of objects which were not present; and metaphorical signs were used when the first two could not be used, to suggest synecdoches or more abstract concepts. Once this language of action was mastered then the explorer could move on to learning the articulate language. Again de Gérando dictated a particular technique for how this should be acquired, beginning with simple words and progressing through to reflective ideas. Simple nouns, such as the 'various parts of the body' should be the starting point, followed by adjectives, verbs, and prepositions. Only after these were established could the explorer move on to how the savage peoples communicate their ideas.

Even though these instructions were written in 1800 it is evident that the approach delineated by de Gérando was a practical one adopted by many of the expeditions prior to then, although very few explorers advanced beyond the learning of simple nouns and verbs. For example, d'Entrecasteaux describes his methodology when gathering his vocabulary of Tasmanian words:

We have made them repeat the same word several times; and after they had repeated it, they would designate the object we had requested them to name. We have asked the same questions of several of them; and we have used the same means to ensure that the pronunciation was correct.⁷²

D'Entrecasteaux stated that he had 'never found contradiction in their answers', so was very confident in the accuracy of his list. Consistent repetition of a word was a favoured control check among the explorers,⁷³ but the problem with this approach was that d'Entrecasteaux, for example, could not be sure whether his informants were consistently repeating the name of the object, or some other quality of the object. Banks was aware of the pitfalls of this method, illustrating his point with a typical scenario:

for instance a man holds in his hand a stone and asks the name of [it]: the Indian may return him for answer either the real name of the stone, one of the properties of it as hardness, roughness, smoothness

⁷² D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia*, 148.

⁷³ D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia*. 148, Tench, 1788. 100, and Labillardière, *Voyage*, 314.

&c. one of its uses or the name peculiar to some particular species of stone, which name the enquirer immediately sets down as that of a stone.⁷⁴

In order to confirm which particular referent a word signified, Banks and two or three others would all independently gather words, noting down the circumstances in which they were used. This committee would then compare their lists and agree upon the most likely translation.⁷⁵ Apart from only producing a lexicon of a mere 38 words, this approach was also problematic because it did not accommodate culturally-determined differences in speech and syntax.

In the eighteenth century it was held that culture produced and developed language, creating words whose meanings can be understood by all in that society. Most language theorists assumed that these words, and the beginnings of language, were created once humanity, possessing all the physical and mental faculties of speech, began to live in a community and needed to make their requirements known to others.⁷⁶ Over time these words and grammatical structures would progressively come to represent more sophisticated ideas, hence language would advance from 'barbarous' 'inarticulate cries' to the 'languages of art' expressed by the western philosophe.⁷⁷ Assuming that their superior culture produced their sophisticated languages these theorists failed to recognise that it was also their culture that produced their way of understanding other languages, and that their ethnocentric speculations might taint their grasp of foreign tongues.

Watkin Tench provides an amusing account of the hazards faced by the explorers when they adopted these approaches in their attempts to acquire the

⁷⁴ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 111-2. Beaglehole notes that the vocabulary contained in Cook's journal had these exact types of errors: some of the words listed as signifying body parts are now known to be translations of the gestures made to indicate the said body part, for example instead of the Endeavour river word for 'head' they collected the word for 'cover'. Cook, *Journals*, 1: 399, footnote.

⁷⁵ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 111-2.

⁷⁶ Stephen K. Land, 'Lord Monboddo and the Theory of Syntax in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 37, No. 3, July-September 1976, 432-440, Paxman, "'Distance Getting Close'", and David B. Paxman, 'Language and Difference: the Problem of Abstraction in Eighteenth-Century Language Study', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Jan. 1993, 19-36.

⁷⁷ These particular terms have been taken from Monboddo. See Land, 'Lord Monboddo', 432.

Aboriginal languages, for the slippery native tongues did not always conform to the western linguists' assumptions. The first sustained attempt to learn the local dialect was initiated by the First Fleet officers and required the physical capture of an Aboriginal informant who could then be forced to act as a tutor and envoy. While earlier European explorers such as the Dutch captain Jan Carstensz, who had landed in Cape York in 1623, had intended on implementing this method, the Britons were the first to make a significant purchase on the language by doing so.⁷⁸ One of the few words learned from their first captive, a Cammeraiagal man named Arabanoo, was *weeree*, or 'bad'.⁷⁹ In order to expand their vocabulary, and promote themselves to the Aboriginal people, the British tried to elicit the word for 'good' from Arabanoo, by presenting him with his favoured objects and asking him if it was *weeree*. When he repeatedly replied *bèeal* the British triumphantly determined that this meant 'good', and so immediately adopted this word into their conversations and campaigning with the local people. However, they were wrong.

Analyses of eighteenth-century language theory may shed light on why the British adopted this method and accepted this first translation. According to Stephen K. Land the prevailing assumptions about primal languages was that the first utterances expressed an 'event-name', or a single term bereft of any overarching structures, and this event-name encapsulated a complete idea, event, or 'state of affairs'.⁸⁰ Developed languages on the other hand would express these notions in sentences, containing grammatical structures such as syntax and cases, demonstrating a more sophisticated faculty of reason. This positivist theory perhaps determined the rapidity with which Tench and his compatriots accepted that their methodology had elicited from Arabanoo the useful term for 'good', and did not foresee that he might have refuted the

⁷⁸ On the 18th April 1623 the men of the *Pera* captured an Aboriginal man with a rope after luring him into their company by offering him some beads. The explanation for his kidnap was so that he could act as an interpreter on later expeditions. Günter Schilder, *Australia Unveiled: The share of the Dutch navigators in the discovery of Australia*, trans. by Olaf Richter, Theatrvm Orbis Terrarvm Ltd., Amsterdam, 1976, 91.

⁷⁹ Tench, 1788.195.

⁸⁰ Land cites the Abbé de Condillac, Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith and Lord Monboddo as proponents of this theory though he stressed that their speculations on how the primitive speaker forms these 'event-names' occurs differently. Land, 'Lord Monboddo', 432.

question 'is this bad?' with 'no' rather than 'good'. Even though the response 'good' to the question of whether or not something is bad is grammatically incorrect in English, these language theories perhaps influenced Tench's assumption that Arabanoo replied with the event-name term for the idea of good, and had not constructed a grammatical reply. It took a comic three years for the British to finally realise their mistake. Tench exclaimed,

How easily people, unused to speak the same language, mistake each other, everyone knows. We had lived almost three years at Port Jackson (for more than half of which period natives had resided with us) before we knew that the word *bécal*, signified "no", and not "good", in which sense we had used it without suspecting that we were wrong; and even without being corrected by those with whom we talked daily.⁸¹

So, even after three years of contact the Europeans had hardly moved beyond de Gérando's second step in studying articulate languages. This example indicates that the failure was partly a consequence of the Aboriginal people's disinclination to correct the Britons' speech, but considering that the early informants like Arabanoo were abductees, and forced to divulge the secrets of their language under duress, this reluctance is not inexplicable.⁸² But the major factor which impeded the explorers' progress in acquiring the indigenous languages was their ethnocentrically-determined low expectation of these 'barbarous' tongues.⁸³

De Gérando proposed that after the elements of articulate speech such as nouns, adjectives, verbs, and prepositions had been harnessed, then the ethnographer could begin to study how savage peoples convey their ideas.⁸⁴ The first category he described was complex ideas, comprising terms such as 'a

⁸¹ Tench, 1788, 195n.

⁸² As kidnapping was not a widespread practice in the Australian exploration context this aspect of language learning will not be discussed in any further detail.

⁸³ Paxman argues that 'those on the front lines of exploration and conquest most often viewed indigenous languages as inferior, just as they judged indigenous technologies and military prowess to be inefficient or backward'. David B. Paxman, *Voyage into Language: Space and the Linguistic Encounter, 1500-1800*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire, 2003, 77-8.

⁸⁴ For example in one of the few accounts of Aboriginal grammar Banks noticed that 'ge' performed the same function in the Endeavour River language as 'a' did in English. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 112.

village, a forest, an army, or war, and so on'.⁸⁵ The next class of ideas the explorers were to investigate was abstract ideas. The explorer was instructed to determine whether the indigenous tongues included distinct names for both the genera and species of plants and animals, and whether or not they had names for abstract ideas, or if their engagement with the world was rooted exclusively in the concrete.⁸⁶ Yet these complex notions were to be conveyed physically through the ambiguous language of gesture. For instance, in determining whether or not the indigenous people had a 'name for the abstract idea of movement', de Gérando suggested that the ethnographer simultaneously point out an animate object and an inanimate and see how their subject responded.⁸⁷ This experiment would inevitably fail because it was, to borrow Banks' words, 'a method obnoxious to many mistakes', posing the same problems raised earlier by the esteemed botanist.⁸⁸

But then de Gérando had anticipated that it would fail, though not on account of his inept methodology, but because he expected that Savage people would have inferior languages.⁸⁹ He posited that no 'doubt the Savages cannot have a large number of abstract ideas, since they have not had the opportunity to carry out systematic comparisons'.⁹⁰ Here de Gérando simply echoed the aforementioned prevailing thought about the limitations of indigenous languages; for example fifty years earlier Charles Marie de la Condamine said about South American languages that 'they [were] universally barren of terms

⁸⁵ De Gérando, *Observation*, 73.

⁸⁶ Radhika Mohanram's critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss' 'The Science of the Concrete' indicates that this western positivist theory of indigenous language and epistemology has endured. Lévi-Strauss constructs the idea of the indigene as a bricoleur whose language is 'entrapped in the world of nature, fauna and flora, and the magical world', and whose 'intuitive knowledge and mythological thought is primitive', and the westerner as the engineer whose language is 'discursively connected to the laws of physics and chemistry', and who has the 'ability to think in the abstract'. Radhika Mohanram, *Black Body: Women, colonialism, and space*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1996, 7-11.

⁸⁷ De Gérando, *Observation*, 73-4.

⁸⁸ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 111.

⁸⁹ Staum discusses the influences of Montesquieu's climate and hygienic theories on the French Institute members, including de Gérando and Péron, in the late eighteenth century. Staum, 'Human Geography in the French Institute'.

⁹⁰ De Gérando, *Observation*, 73-4.

for the expression of abstract or universal ideas'.⁹¹ A popular proof of the absence of abstract terms in indigenous tongues was the idea that they did not include any words to express generalisations, but instead the unwieldy languages were supposed to use numerous independent words to signify the different components of the action.⁹²

James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, claimed that if the savage people's 'sphere of life were not very narrow, there would be such a multiplicity of words entirely different from one another, that the memory would be overburdened, and the language become too bulky and cumbersome for use'.⁹³ This notion was not a new idea in the eighteenth century, however, but reflected a long-standing prejudice, which had been contested in the late seventeenth century. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* John Locke dismissed the logic of the claim that some indigenous languages lacked abstract terms. He held that 'it is beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with: every bird and beast men saw, every tree and plant that affected the senses, could not find a place in the most capacious understanding'.⁹⁴ So while there was little to indicate the Aborigines' prodigious power of recollection, the explorers were able to find proof that the Aboriginal tongues included terms for abstract concepts.

⁹¹ Charles Marie de La Condamine. *relation abrégée d'un voyage fait dans l'intérieur de l'Amérique méridionale*. Paris. 1745, translated in John Pinkerton (ed.). *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Travels*, 17 Vols., London. 1808-14, Vol. XIV, 222, cited in Paxman, 'Language and Difference', 27. Edmund Burke shared this view, but was less vitriolic. He stated: 'uncultivated people are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them'. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, J.T. Boulton (ed.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1958, 176, cited in Paxman, "'Distance Getting Close'", 86.

⁹² E.J. Payne, claimed that primitive people 'will have twenty independent words each expressing the act of cutting some particular thing, without having any name for the act of cutting in general'. Edward J. Payne, *The History of the New World Called America*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1892-99, Vol. II, 103, cited in Paxman, 'Language and Difference', 23.

⁹³ James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, (1773-1792), Six Volumes, English Linguistics 1500-1800, no. 48, Scholar Press, Menston, 1967, Vol. 1, 365, cited in Adam R. Beach, 'The Creation of a Classical Language in the Eighteenth Century: Standardizing English, Cultural Imperialism, and the Future of the Literary Canon', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2001, 121. See also Land, 'Lord Monboddo', 436-8.

⁹⁴ John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, A.S. Pringle-Pattison (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1924, Book III, Ch. 3, 2, p. 227.

In contrast to Lord Monboddo's claim the explorers documented numerous generalisations for actions in their vocabularies; for example Péron included in his vocabulary the terms for complete actions such as kneeling (*gouanera*), jumping (*gouaragrâ*), and kicking (*veré*) and not a myriad of words signifying each component of the action.⁹⁵ The Tasmanians also had names for different species and differentiated them from one another. Labillardière observed a Tasmanian man inspecting the vegetable garden that the French had planted on their previous stay, and noted that he appeared to 'distinguish them perfectly from their indigenous vegetables'.⁹⁶ He also noticed that the Tasmanians had 'given a particular name to every vegetable', and even verified this with the popular method of asking several of them to repeat the names at different times.⁹⁷ Abstract concepts were also conveyed to the explorers, demonstrating that the Aboriginal languages not only included abstract terms, but that they were also adaptive, with neologisms being coined for unfamiliar objects and new concepts.⁹⁸ The most striking example of this was documented by Tench in the aforementioned 1791 expedition to 'ascertain whether or not the Hawkesbury and Nepean were the same river'.⁹⁹

The expedition party consisted of 21, including the Aboriginal men Colbee and Boladeree who could act as guides and translators. Unfortunately, these men were unfamiliar with this area, so once the group had passed Rose Hill they were of little assistance in leading them further into the interior, so much so that Tench incredulously observed that they did not even know from which direction they had just come.¹⁰⁰ Yet despite, or because of, their poor sense of direction, Colbee and Boladeree took a great interest in the Britons'

⁹⁵ Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, 73-4.

⁹⁶ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 301-2. D'Entrecasteaux states 'one of the natives showed him [M. La Haye] the plants which had lifted up; he was making a perfect distinction between them and the indigenous plants, although they were nearly imperceptible'. D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia*, 142.

⁹⁷ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 314.

⁹⁸ This is not to suggest that the Aboriginal speakers did not adopt foreign terms as well. Tench describes an incident whereby Bennelong demonstrates his cosmopolitan sophistication to his 'countrymen' by explaining the 'use and nature' of the British objects. In his explanation of 'a pair of snuffers, he told them that they were "*Nuffer for candle*"', but the others did not comprehend his meaning. Tench, 1788, 36.

⁹⁹ Tench, 1788, 185.

¹⁰⁰ Tench, 1788, 189.

compass. This instrument caught their eye early on and generated much discussion between themselves. Tench stated that they ‘comprehended its use and called it “*naa-mòro*”, literally, “to see the way”’; and exclaimed that ‘a more significant or expressive term cannot be found’.¹⁰¹ This example illustrates that the Aboriginal people possessed and communicated what de Gérando described as ‘abstract ideas’, but deciphering whether or not the languages accommodated intangible abstract concepts was more difficult.¹⁰²

The intangible abstract concept which was of most interest to the Europeans was divine in nature. The existence of Aboriginal spiritual beliefs tantalised the Europeans, for they perceived potential signs of its existence, but could not confirm whether or not the Aborigines named their deities.¹⁰³ D’Entrecasteaux was intrigued as to why the Tasmanians kept preventing them from nearing a particular site, for each time they approached the woods the women, who appeared to be keeping guard, would holler loudly. Finding it implausible that they were preventing the French from discovering their cache of ‘pitiful and easily replaceable weapons’, d’Entrecasteaux surmised that the ground must contain more significant secrets. So he speculated that it might be a place ‘consecrated to a deity’, but found it impossible to specifically question the men on this, especially as their only means of communication was to use signs and gestures: ‘We have tried in vain to get enlightenment on this subject,

¹⁰¹ Tench, 1788,189.

¹⁰² De Gérando, *Observation*, 73-4.

¹⁰³ Shortly after landing in New Holland Péron discovers a site which he considered to be of great significance, but unfortunately did not meet any locals so could only romantically speculate that ‘This charming place ... is probably dedicated to some public or private mystery. The worship of the gods may be the particular object. ... A new race of Egyptians, who probably like the ancient inhabitants of the Nile, have consecrated by their gratitude the stream which supplies their wants. Perhaps on particular solemn occasions, they assemble on its shores to pay the debt of gratitude, and offer up their thanksgivings!’. Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, 64. In 1790 King was able to interview the Port Jackson Aborigines about their ontology but still was unable to confidently ascertain whether or not they believed in any deities. He states ‘No signs of any religion have been observed among them, yet they are not entirely ignorant of a future state, as they say the bones of the dead are in the grave, and the body is in the clouds; or, as those we have had with us may have been misunderstood, they probably mean that the soul is in the clouds: Wolare-warrè [Bennelong] once asked the judge-advocate, if the white men went to the clouds also’. P.G. King, ‘Lieutenant King’s Journal’, in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 275.

as no sign language has been successful to get this across'.¹⁰⁴ Instead of attributing his ignorance in this regard to the poverty of his party's means of communication, d'Entrecasteaux leapt to the conclusion that the reason why they could not ascertain whether the Tasmanians had any religious beliefs was simply because they did not. He pronounced, 'I am inclined to think that the belief in a divinity is foreign to them'.¹⁰⁵

This passage echoes the same western approach to indigenous religious beliefs of much earlier explorers. The sixteenth-century Italian navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano said of the South Americans that:

due to the lack of language, we were unable to find by signs or gestures how much religious faith these people we found possessed. We think they have neither religion nor laws, that they do not know of a First Cause or Author, that they do not worship the sky, the stars, the sun, the moon, or other planets, nor do they even practice any kind of idolatry.¹⁰⁶

Despite recognising the inadequacy of gestural communication in both cases the Europeans interpreted the indigenous silence as an absence. Faith in the superiority of their language, reason, and 'operations of the soul', combined with a concomitant expectation of the other's lack of these, enabled the Europeans to draw this conclusion, even in the face of contemporary warnings against doing so.¹⁰⁷ For example the eighteenth-century Jesuit priest Joseph-François Lafitau recognised the related European tendency to assume that if the indigene did not possess a word for an idea it was because they did not have the idea. Lafitau responded that languages 'could be so entirely different from each other that there would not be a single word or expression with the same meaning in two languages except through pure chance or communication'.¹⁰⁸ Given this

¹⁰⁴ D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia*, 146.

¹⁰⁵ D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia*, 146.

¹⁰⁶ Verrazzano in David Beers Quinn (ed.), *New American World, A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, Arno Press and Hector Bye, New York, 1979, Vol. 1, 287, cited in Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 104.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph-François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians*, (1724), William Fenton and Elizabeth Moore (trans. and ed.), 2 Vols., Toronto, 1974, Vol. 2, 266, cited in Paxman, 'Language and Difference', 25.

¹⁰⁸ Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians*, 266, cited in Paxman, 'Language and Difference', 25.

contemporary insight, why did d'Entrecasteaux echo Verrazzano's leap of faith regarding the Tasmanians' lack of faith?

Greenblatt makes an interesting observation which sheds some light on this question; simply that explorers cannot be confused with missionaries. So, in this instance, we see that unlike Lafitau, Verrazzano and d'Entrecasteaux had no intention of truly understanding their colonisable quarry, because, to borrow Greenblatt's words, as explorers 'they had little practical interest in immersing themselves in native culture and no desire to do so. To learn a language may be a step towards mastery, but to *study* a language is to place oneself in a situation of dependency, to submit'.¹⁰⁹ Greenblatt's suggestion helps to bridge the gulf between the explorers' desire to acquire the Aboriginal languages, and their abject failure to do so. Despite their stated anthropological or mercantile imperatives to study the indigenous tongues, the explorers were repulsed by the notion of submitting to the Other. They were only willing to go as far as accumulating vocabularies, imagining that they could garner prestige without the risk of being absorbed by the indigenous culture. The only way to reconcile their pragmatic need to communicate with the Aboriginal people and their desire to remain independent of them was to teach their languages instead.

v. bestowing the superior tongue

European endeavours to teach Aboriginal men their languages highlighted that such practices were contingent upon the corporeality of the men. For instance some explorers supposed that their students' command of these foreign languages was affected by their physical faculties of speech. Baudin assumed that his attempt to teach Tasmanian men some words of French was only hindered by the inability of Tasmanian lips, teeth and tongues to pronounce certain letters. He stated: 'We said various words for them, which they repeated very clearly, and I was amazed, even, at the small amount of trouble that they

¹⁰⁹ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 104. Frantz Fanon makes a similar argument in his autobiographical discussion of the hegemony of language and its role in assimilation for he states 'To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is'. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*. Charles Lam Markmann (trans.), Grove Press, New York, 1967 [1952], 38.

had. However, any words in which there were 'R's and 'S's were not so easy for them'.¹¹⁰ However, this lesson was essentially a parroting exercise, whereby the indigenous interlocutors mimicked the French. As Greenblatt suggests, real language learning requires submission, which in most cases could only be elicited through physical capture, incarceration, and subordination. Within the explorer context, only the British First Fleet officers were equipped to do this.

As previously mentioned, the first man to be kidnapped by the British was Arabanoo. Before he could begin to be taught English, the British first had to try assimilate him, a process which was entirely enacted on his body. Firstly, his physical appearance was transformed: he was bathed, groomed, and dressed in 'a shirt, a jacket and a pair of trousers'.¹¹¹ His final 'adornment' was 'a handcuff with a rope attached',¹¹² a restraint which he would wear for all but the final few weeks of his five month internment at Port Jackson.¹¹³ The distress his incarceration caused him even manifested in his voice, for Tench noted that it was 'broken and interrupted with dismay', but over time it seems that he became resigned to his fate.¹¹⁴ His apparent capitulation to the British suggests that Arabanoo would be an ideal candidate to learn English, but he failed to live up to British expectations.

The only English word learned by Arabanoo which was documented by Tench was 'woman',¹¹⁵ for in all other instances Tench only mentioned the Aboriginal words that Arabanoo had taught them. After Arabanoo's death from

¹¹⁰ Baudin, *The Journal*, 321. Tench observed that the men of Port Jackson had similar problems with pronouncing certain letters, in this case S and T, which they simply omitted. Tench, 1788, 149.

¹¹¹ Tench, 1788, 97.

¹¹² According to Tench when Arabanoo was handcuffed he apparently first delighted in it, calling it *bengadee* or 'ornament', but he became enraged when he realised its true purpose. However, it is not clear as to whether or not it was Arabanoo or the British who named the shackle as an 'ornament' as Hunter contradicts Tench by stating that Arabanoo was 'taught to consider [it] as *bang-ally*, which is the name given in their language to every decoration'. Tench, 1788, 97 and John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 133.

¹¹³ In those last weeks when he had 'hardly any restraint', the fact that he did not escape was considered a sign that he was the 'only native who was ever attached to us from choice'. Tench, 1788, 108.

¹¹⁴ Tench, 1788, 32.

smallpox Tench regretfully stated that 'He did not want docility, but either from the difficulty of acquiring [the English] language, from the unskilfulness of his teachers, or from some natural defect, his progress in learning it was not equal to what [the British] had expected'.¹¹⁶ Reflecting on Arabanoo's temperament after his death, Tench recognised that despite his seeming acceptance of his situation, Arabanoo never completely submitted to the British: 'Although of a gentle and placable temper, [they] early discovered that he was impatient of indignity and allowed no superiority on [their] part. He knew that he was in [their] power, but the independence of his mind never forsook him'.¹¹⁷ Perhaps Arabanoo was not so dissimilar from his European captors and shared their reluctance, as Greenblatt suggests, to 'place [himself] in a situation of dependency'.¹¹⁸ The next captive, however, seemed much more willing to submit to the political will of the British, and accordingly was represented with a firmer grasp of the English language.

In December 1789, six months after Arabanoo's death, the governor once again decided to kidnap another two Aboriginal men, this time capturing Còlbee and Bennelong. Còlbee effected his escape within his first week at the settlement, but according to all reports Bennelong 'felt satisfaction in his new state' of incarceration, especially after Còlbee's departure.¹¹⁹ It seems that his English language tutelage began immediately for the British were clearly impressed with his progress. Within two pages of introducing Bennelong to his reader Tench had already testified that:

His powers of mind were certainly far above mediocrity. He acquired knowledge, both of our manners and language, faster than his predecessor had done. He willingly communicated information, sang, danced and capered, told us all the customs of his country and all the details of his family economy.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Tench, 1788, 96. Hunter also notes that he was taught the names of those 'different gentlemen who took notice of him'. Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, 133.

¹¹⁶ Tench, 1788, 108. Although Bradley claims that Arabanoo 'got some of our language as well as communicated enough of theirs'. Bradley, *A Voyage*, 168.

¹¹⁷ Tench, 1788, 108.

¹¹⁸ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 104.

¹¹⁹ Tench, 1788, 116-7.

¹²⁰ Tench, 1788, 118.

Tench then describes some of the information that Bennelong communicated to him, however it is his recitation of a conversation about the nefarious circumstances behind one of Bennelong's wounds that is most interesting. Tench writes:

'But the wound on the back of your hand, Baneelon! How did you get that?'

He laughed, and owned that it was received in carrying off a lady of another tribe by force. 'I dragged her away. She cried aloud, and stuck her teeth in me'.

'And what did you do then?'

'I knocked her down, and beat her till she was insensible, and covered with blood. Then...'¹²¹

The punctuation makes this an unusual entry for Tench because he did not often cite conversations directly. In fact most of the explorers generally paraphrased the perceived meaning behind exchanges with Aboriginal people, which were no doubt communicated through a combination of English and Aboriginal words, gestures, demeanour, and context. So Tench's use of quotation marks in this dialogue suggests that the words attributed to Bennelong are his own and not merely the interpretation of his gestures. However, it is unlikely that Bennelong's English was this proficient, especially within his first month of captivity, as implied by the location of this extract within Tench's journal. Even if this conversation had been conducted at a later date, and included in Tench's journal at first mention of Bennelong because of what it revealed about his character, it is still unlikely that his English was ever this proficient during Tench's commission. Bennelong escaped four months after his capture,¹²² and within that period was routinely documented by other officers as using gestures or speaking his own tongue.¹²³ While there is little doubt that Bennelong was an effective communicator with the British, it is implausible that

¹²¹ Tench, 1788, 118.

¹²² Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, 139.

¹²³ Phillip describes Bennelong gesturing and using signs to communicate to the British still in November 1790, 11 months after his first introduction to the British. Arthur Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*. John Bach (ed.). Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 324, and King details the Aboriginal words that Bennelong spoke, including some which remained untranslated, indicating that he spoke his own language and that the British had not yet mastered it, as might be inferred from King's translations of some of Bennelong's speech. King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', 275-6.

he was so fluent in English; so why did Tench portray him with this degree of proficiency?

To explain this we can return to Greenblatt's thesis that language learning entailed submission. Unlike Arabanoo, whose independence prevented him from tolerating any injury against his pride, Bennelong appeared to acquiesce to the British and play the foil in their pranks. King stated that 'He is very good-natured, being seldom angry at any jokes that may be passed upon him, and he readily imitates all the actions and gestures of every person in the governor's family'.¹²⁴ Bennelong's apparent capitulation was also evidenced by his willingness to sing and dance at the behest of the officers, and the conscientiousness he displayed in learning the British mores and manners. His assimilation was also suggested by his adoption of western dress, and his observance of the Sabbath by wearing his Sunday best.¹²⁵ Tench himself used one word to describe his temperament: 'pliant'.¹²⁶ So perhaps Tench's use of quotation marks was not to portray Bennelong's literal fluency in English, but instead his metaphorical submission to the British. Conferring English speech on him represented the degree to which he had been assimilated, and rendered him a model subject. However, this is not to say that Bennelong had actually surrendered to the British.

Juxtaposed to this patronising depiction of Bennelong as compliant and malleable, is a portrayal of him as an exemplary political animal, machinating ways to elevate his own standing and prestige within the indigenous polity.¹²⁷ He forged a close relationship with the governor, accompanying him on his walks during his period of incarceration, and then after his escape often returning to visit Phillip. The fact that Bennelong ascribed the governor with an honorific title was cited as evidence of their friendship: he called the governor

¹²⁴ King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', 269.

¹²⁵ King, 'Lieutenant King's Journal', 269.

¹²⁶ Tench, 1788, 119.

¹²⁷ Inga Clendinnen enthusiastically adopts this notion, suggesting that almost immediately after his capture he decided to try and forge an alliance with the British. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 107.

“*Beanga*” or Father; and the governor call[ed] him “*Doorooow*” or Son’.¹²⁸ But the British also observed that Bennelong exchanged names with the governor, a practice which Tench claims is a ‘constant symbol of friendship’ among Aboriginal people and the peoples of Asia and the South Seas. Yet, there was a crucial detail about this exchange that Tench described, despite appearing not to realise its potential significance. By calling Phillip his preferred name Wolarawaree he in turn adopted ‘to himself the name of governor’.¹²⁹ Surprisingly, Inga Clendinnen, who strongly argues that Bennelong was very politically minded and astute, only sees this exchange of names as a mark of his affection,¹³⁰ and does not recognise that this trading of Aboriginal and English words conferred on Bennelong the authority to act as an intermediary between both societies, and thereby garner prestige and power.

Considering this exchange of names as the forging of a political relationship between Phillip and Bennelong, rather than as a symbol of their intense friendship, explains some of Bennelong’s apparently mercurial behaviour. For example, the first time the British encountered Bennelong after his escape was at Manly-Bay, where some two hundred Aborigines were gathered to feast on a whale. In an ostentatious display of diplomacy Bennelong presented the sailors with a piece of whale meat to take back as a present for the governor.¹³¹ Upon hearing that Bennelong was at Manly, Phillip immediately went there to meet with him, but shortly after his landing the unlucky governor was speared by an anxious young man.¹³² Phillip excused this attack, attributing it to a ‘momentary impulse of fear’, but was perplexed at Bennelong’s behaviour. According to Phillip ‘the behaviour of Bannelong on this occasion is not so easily to be accounted for. He never attempted to interfere when the man

¹²⁸ King, ‘Lieutenant King’s Journal’, 269. See also Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, 141, Collins, *An Account*, 452, and Tench, 1788, 119.

¹²⁹ Tench, 1788, 119.

¹³⁰ Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, 103-4.

¹³¹ Phillip, ‘Phillip’s Journal’, 305.

¹³² Clendinnen contests the accepted view that Phillip’s spearing was a result of panic, and proposes that Bennelong had staged either a ritualistic spearing contest or Phillip’s punishment for British transgressions. This is an interesting opinion, but the prevailing view of the contemporary Britons was that it was nervous reaction. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 123-4. This spearing of Governor Phillip at Manly is discussed in detail in chapter 7 ‘Belligerent Bodies’.

took the spear up, or said a single word to prevent him from throwing it'.¹³³ Phillip was clearly shocked that his esteemed friend had not leapt to his defence, and was further confounded when days later Bennelong 'enquired if the governor was dead' and claimed to have beaten Wil-le-me-ring, the man who had speared him.¹³⁴

Evidently the British had misinterpreted the significance of exchanging names, for it appears to have been a strategic endeavour for Bennelong rather than a symbol of intense friendship. He took advantage of his unique position in the colony, for while it is doubtful that his English was as proficient as Tench suggested, he certainly had the strongest grasp of both languages of any adult at Port Jackson, a skill he apparently put to use in attempting to elicit British might in order to wreak vengeance on his indigenous enemies. Clendinnen also considers his actions strategic, but holds on to the belief that the exchange of names was still a mark of affection. She argues that the spearing was planned, and that Bennelong had attempted to inform Phillip that he was going to be ritually speared, and that his role as 'master of ceremonies' in the performance required him to remain disassociated despite his affection for the governor.¹³⁵ Yet, if his role in the spearing could be strategic, why not his exchange of names as well?

In adopting 'to himself the name of governor' he tried to control the British marines. According to Phillip 'from the first day he was able to make himself understood he was desirous to have all the tribe of the Cammeragal killed'.¹³⁶ But his behaviour was still confounding and manipulative, because despite these declarations Bennelong was frequently observed keeping amiable company with the Cammeragal and other tribes which he had portrayed as his enemy, including the Botany Bay men whom he accused of 'always kill[ing] the

¹³³ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 308.

¹³⁴ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 310-311. Tench claims that shortly after the spearing Bennelong and Colbee and both been interviewed by some of the boat's crew, and 'Like the others, they had *pretended* highly to disapprove the conduct of the man who had thrown the spear, vowing to execute vengeance upon him' (my emphasis). Tench, 1788, 140.

¹³⁵ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 128-9.

¹³⁶ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 324.

white men'.¹³⁷ Eventually 'Governor Phillip began to suspect, though very unwillingly, that there was a great deal of art and cunning in Bennelong'.¹³⁸ But Bennelong was not alone in conveying misleading information. Despite the British faith in the apparent honesty of the Aborigines¹³⁹ they eventually realised that these supposedly guileless natives were more than capable of lying when it suited them. Collins stated:

we have many proofs of their being adept in the arts of evasion and lying; and I have seen them, when we expressed doubts of some of their tales, assure us with much earnestness of the truth of their assertions; and when speaking to us of other natives they have anxiously wished us to believe that they had told us lies.¹⁴⁰

Bennelong's command of the English and Aboriginal languages ensured that he was the intermediary between the two cultures, a position which afforded him a certain degree of power: he was given gifts of great value and pardoned for acts of 'savage insolence' which would have resulted in capital punishment for anyone else.¹⁴¹ Only this was not recognised by the British until after the fact, as their presumptions about his assimilation blinded them to the fact that he was deliberately misleading them for his own purposes. The explorers' aversion to submitting to the Other by learning their foreign tongues ironically resulted in their temporary dependence on their indigenous translator.

vi. conclusion

Documenting the indigenous tongues was a fraught affair for the European explorers, because it required much greater contact with their ethnographic quarry than their studies on the other parts of the Aboriginal male body. No longer could the explorers simply construct their ethnographies by observing from a distance. Instead they had to enter the Aboriginal polity by ingratiating themselves through giving gifts, undertaking conciliatory measures such as uttering some words from other savage languages, or acting out amusing mimes.

¹³⁷ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 323 and 327.

¹³⁸ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 327.

¹³⁹ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 314.

¹⁴⁰ Collins, *An Account*, 498.

¹⁴¹ Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 313 and 333.

In short they had to submit themselves to the mercy of the indigenous hosts. Yet, for many of the explorers this endeavour achieved very little reward: the tongues remained elusive, for most explorers were only able to document slight vocabularies and remained ignorant about indigenous grammar. This prevented any effective communication, so both European and indigene remained baffled by the other. While there were many practical factors which prevented the explorers from mastering the Aboriginal languages, the main obstruction was their ambivalence about truly submitting to the Aboriginal culture and entering the Other's society. The British tried to subvert this by wresting Aboriginal men from their world and incarcerating them within the confines of their settlement, little realising that despite the shackles and surveillance they were still somewhat dependent on their indigenous interlocutors. It is because of this ambivalence that the explorers failed to acquire the indigenous tongues, as they were reluctant to truly engage with their indigenous objects of inquiry. So despite the necessary contact that documenting languages required, we find that their representation of the indigenous tongue was just as arbitrarily constructed as their depictions of the other Aboriginal body parts.

In their representations of the Aboriginal male body, the late eighteenth-century explorers discursively fractured it into individual pieces, describing discrete parts which they thought could be easily apprehended and comprehended. To their consternation the explorers found that instead of making the Aboriginal men more available for European understanding, this fragmented view of the body only created confusion. Apparently simple aspects such as skin colour, facial contours, and hair texture eluded empirical and universal definition. Unanticipated indigenous cultural and social practices masked and obscured the body parts, and individual Aboriginal men either failed or refused to participate in the naturalists' experiments and interviews. But the men themselves were not the only obstacles: inexpert ethnographers found their methodologies and vocabularies wanting; and the explorers' individual philosophies and ideologies, self-satisfaction and *amore propre*, combined with their strategic interests in resources or prestige blinkered the explorers' perceptions of their subjects. In many regards the fragmented indigenous male body defied comprehension. Yet, the explorers' accounts not

TONGUE

only splintered the men into discrete body parts, they also compartmentalised them by focussing on particular actions, considering each subject to the men's corporeality either through physical instincts and drives or weaknesses and strengths. The next part of the thesis will examine the body in action, such as martial and carnal acts, as well as ostensible inaction, such as indolence and relaxation.

BODY IN ACTION

MARTIAL BODIES

i. a state of warre?

Many of the explorers who navigated Australian waters in the late eighteenth century were familiar with contemporary ideas about so-called savage societies, and to them none must have seemed as important as those concerning warfare. While the drive for self-preservation ensured that they sought to arm themselves with knowledge, they were also intrigued by long-standing questions about the origins and nature of war. During this period philosophers increasingly looked towards savage societies to ascertain whether or not ‘mankind is innately warlike and has always been so’.¹ Some scholars argue that this inquiry was dominated by proponents of Thomas Hobbes’ views that savage life suffered the burden of perpetual warfare, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s rejoinder that the state of nature was inherently peaceful.² The explorers were in the privileged position to test these theses first hand, so sought to investigate the martial drives and expertise of the Aboriginal men they encountered.

Leviathan (1651) was written during the Civil War, reflecting Hobbes’ concern with the question of how unity and peace could be maintained. He proposed that war and conflict were the natural state of man, for ‘Nature hath made man ... equall’, and such equality would lead to ‘quarrells’ caused by

¹ Doyne Dawson, ‘The Origins of War: Biological and Anthropological Theories’, *History and Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1996, 3.

² Dawson, ‘Origins of War’, 3 & 5; and Lawrence H. Keeley, *War Before Civilization*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, 5-8.

competition, diffidence, and the desire for glory.³ In turn, this would result in savage man living 'in that condition which is called warre' which could only be prevented by a 'common Power to keep them all in awe'. Lacking this single authority to make and enforce laws 'men live without security', so there is 'no place for Industry', 'Knowledge', and 'Arts', and 'worst of all' man lives in 'continuall feare, and danger of violent death'. Thus Hobbes famously concluded that 'the life of man' in the state of nature would be 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short'. Any sceptics who thought that 'there was never such a time' were referred to 'the savage people in many places of *America*' who still 'live at this day in that brutish manner'.⁴

Though this was only a passing reference to the contemporary ethnography, reports of the ostensible poverty and violence of native American peoples were frequently cited, and echoed older descriptions of other purportedly savage societies, for example Edmund Spenser's 1596 allegation that the Irish were 'voide of all law' so 'cruel and bloody' in war.⁵ Historian Doyne Dawson notes that in the eighteenth-century, Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson used more extensive ethnographic data in an attempt to empirically confirm Hobbes' argument, and grandly claimed that 'in every rude state, the greatest business is war'.⁶ Even Edmund Burke, who condemned the colonial depredations on indigenous people in India, held that only the benefits of civilisation could put an end to savage warfare. In his 'Address to the Colonists'

³ He adds that this equality gave rise to 'an equality of hope in attaining our Ends'. The desire to achieve one's ends would lead to the first principle cause of quarrel, competition, which in turn led to his second, diffidence, by which man would use violence to defend himself. Glory was his third principle cause 'For every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himselfe'. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [1651], C.B. Macpherson (ed.), Penguin Books, London, 1968, 183-4.

⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 185-7.

⁵ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* [1596], W.L. Renwick (ed.), Oxford, 1970, 108, cited in Ronald Dale Karr, "'Why Should You Be So Furious?": The Violence of the Pequot War', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 3, 1998, 886. For an account of the history of European prejudicial conceptions of indigenous Americans see Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*, Routledge, London, 1998, 15-25.

⁶ Advocating the necessity for a Hobbesian system of law, Ferguson invoked the spectre of savage society to support his claim that the 'advance from barbarity to civilisation' required temperance, for the uncivilised were motivated 'by "great passions"', "the prospect of ruin or conquest", inclined to "sloth" but "bold, impetuous, artful and rapacious" in the hunt'. Adam Ferguson, *Essays on the History of Civil Society* [1767], New York, 1971, 3.5, cited in Dawson,

he lamented the violent conflict between the settlers and native Americans, apologising for not 'bringing gradually that unhappy part of mankind into civility, order, piety and virtuous discipline' and instead having 'confirmed their evil habits, and encreased their natural ferocity'.⁷

However, not all eighteenth-century thought condemned the ostensibly inevitable violence of the state of nature. Whilst he took the bellicosity of savage man for granted, Lord Kames, Henry Home, applauded them for it in his criticism of 'perpetual prosperity and peace', which he believed made civilised man 'degenerate into a mean, impotent, and selfish animal'. He claimed 'An American savage, who treasures up the scalps of his enemies as trophies of his prowess, is a being far superior'. Despite his rhetoric Lord Kames did not completely advocate savage life for he claimed that 'perpetual war is bad', and held that to 'prevent such woeful degeneracy ... war and peace alternately are the only effectual means'.⁸ While there were multiple views on the nature of savage warfare, according to Dawson and anthropologist Lawrence Keeley, the Hobbesian view held sway until the nineteenth century, but in the eighteenth century received its strongest critique from Rousseau.

In *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755) Rousseau refuted Hobbes by arguing that war was instead a result of man's organisation into 'separate societies with artificial rather than natural laws'.⁹ He claimed that Hobbes believed savage man to be 'naturally evil' because 'he had wrongly injected into the savage man's concern for self-preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions which are the product of society and which have made laws necessary'.¹⁰ For Rousseau, it was the creation of property, laws, social institutions, and the ensuing diversity of lifestyles which led to inequality, not

'Origins of War', 4, and Bruce Buchan, 'Civilisation, Sovereignty and War: The Scottish Enlightenment and International Relations', *International Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2006, 184.

⁷ Edmund Burke, 'Address to the Colonists' [1777], in *Writings and Speeches*, Warren Elofsen and John Woods (eds), Oxford, 1996, Vol. 3, 282, cited in Luke Gibbons, "'Subtilized into Savages": Edmund Burke, Progress, and Primitivism', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 100, No. 1, 2001, 104.

⁸ Lord Kames, Henry Home, *Sketches of the History of Man: Considerably enlarged by the last additions and corrections of the author. In Four volumes...* A Strahan and T. Caddell, London, 1788, Vol. 2, 300-1 & 316.

⁹ Keeley, *War Before Civilisation*, 6.

the 'simplicity and uniformity of ... savage life'.¹¹ He balked at Hobbes' claim that war is 'of every man against every man' by pronouncing that it is 'not a concern between man and man but between State and State'.¹²

Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu concurred with Rousseau, pronouncing that 'As soon as men are in society, they lose their feeling of weakness; the equality that was among them ceases, and the state of war begins'.¹³ However, he did not necessarily hold that this was a terrible thing, as the state of war between both society and men brought 'about the establishment of laws'. And while he observed that the 'object of war is victory; of victory, conquest; of conquest, preservation', Montesquieu posited that laws could govern the nature of warfare, and even conquest could have some advantages for the conquered: for instance 'correcting' abuses and governments which have 'become an oppressor', as well as 'destroy[ing] harmful prejudices' and customs.¹⁴

Eighteenth-century thought on the nature of warfare was not only concerned with the mechanics of violence and protocols, but was also absorbed by broader questions on the nature of society, civilisation, and law. As such, investigating the martial nature of Aboriginal men was one of the most important tasks faced by the explorers, for such knowledge contributed to safeguarding their own bodies, and more significantly, provided important data for theories on the progress of civilisation. The individual explorers were influenced by these diverse theses so all held different ideas about savage warriors, which were in turn moulded by their experiences in the south seas. Consequently, the representations and explanations of Aboriginal defence and aggression were incredibly varied, appearing to somewhat contradictorily

¹⁰ Jean Jacques Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* [1755]. Donald A. Cress (trans). Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1992, 35.

¹¹ As an example of this he argued that the inequalities of civilised life meant people abstained from evil only by knowing virtue, whereas Rousseau posits that the simplicity of savage life ensured this through the ignorance of vice. Rousseau, *Discourse*, 36 & 42.

¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 185 and Jean Jacques Rousseau. *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right* [1762]. Charles Frankel (ed.). Hafner Publishing Company, New York, 1947, 11.

¹³ Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (trans. and eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, 7.

support the views of both Hobbes and Rousseau. This chapter will explore the eighteenth-century explorers' depictions of the Aboriginal martial body, from the explorers' instructions concerning their treatment of the indigenes, the Aboriginal men's reactions to the arrival of the strangers, and their descriptions of the clash of bodies in Aboriginal ritual warfare. Finally, it will analyse the explorers' attempts to measure the Aboriginal martial body's physical strength, agility, and prowess.

ii. they could never be the Aggressors

Despite the prevalence of Rousseauian thought, the eighteenth-century Europeans were prepared for the Aboriginal men's first reaction to the unexpected arrival of strangers to be martial in nature. The experiences of earlier navigators, combined with the belligerent logic of imperial interests, predicted that the explorers' sudden appearance on foreign soil would induce some degree of defensive hostility, motivated by either fear and trepidation, or belligerence and aggression. Yet, such an expectation did not elicit much anxiety from the navigators because it was tempered by a confidence in the superiority of their weapons over any brandished by natives, and more importantly, the self-assurance that they possessed a higher sense of honour and reason, so could deftly negotiate any volatile situations. Unlike their seventeenth-century counterparts who had been feverishly warned about the 'wild, cruel, black, and barbarous men who killed some of [their] sailors', the eighteenth-century explorers were ordered to treat the natives humanely, so were armed with instructions on how to defuse any tensions and 'conciliate their affections'.¹⁵

¹⁴ To prove this he cites examples of the elimination of child sacrifice amongst the Carthaginians by the conquering Syracusians, Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, 141-2.

¹⁵ This description pertains to the killing of a sailor during Jansz's 1606 landing at Cape York, and was included in the instructions issued to Abel Tasman in 1644, for his second voyage to Australia. ARAKA 771, *Batavias Brieff Boek lopende van 15 Januarji tot 29 November Anno 1644* No. 2, fol. 39, cited in Günter Schilder, *Australia Unveiled: The Share of the Dutch Navigators in the Discovery of Australia*, Olaf Richter (trans.), Theatrvm Orbis Terrarvm Ltd, Amsterdam, 1976, 50, and Arthur Phillip, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and observations on affairs of the time by Lord Auckland*, James J. Auchmuty (ed.), Published in Association with the Royal Australian Historical Society and Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, 44.

MARTIAL BODIES

The *Endeavour* expedition had been prepared by the Royal Society, and 'Hints' on how to deal with indigenous people were drafted by the Earl of Morton, James Douglas.¹⁶ The captain, Lieutenant James Cook, had been advised to 'exercise the utmost patience and forbearance' towards any people encountered, and remember that 'shedding the blood of those people is a crime of the highest nature'. The Earl also warned that the natives 'may naturally and justly attempt to repel intruders', but the British should attempt to 'convince them of the Superiority of Europeans without slaying any of those poor people'. To this end they might shoot a passing animal, blast a hole through a native manufacture, or scare the indigenes with the sound of a gunshot. Should any of the indigenous people be 'slain' Cook's men were to ensure that the survivors 'be made sensible that it was done only from a motive of self defence', and that 'the Crew still considers them as Lords of the Country'.¹⁷

Cook had tried to respect this humane edict but during the course of the voyage found it increasingly difficult to restrain his men. During the *Endeavour's* stay in Matavai Bay the British quickly found reason to fire on the Tahitians. One day Cook left the young midshipman Jonathan Monkhouse in charge while he and botanist Joseph Banks explored the woods. When the alarm was raised over a stolen musket, Monkhouse ordered the marines to open fire, which they did 'with the greatest glee imaginable, as if they had been shooting at ducks'.¹⁸ Despite his dismay at the men's macabre sport, Cook came to recognise the bloody expediency that British gunfire afforded.

The navigator came to realise that he could impose his will over indigenous people with the might of his musket. After his stay in New Zealand, and on his voyage to Australia, Cook reflected on the pragmatic benefits of his stronger firepower, musing that once the Maori 'found that our Arms were so

¹⁶ James Douglas, 14th Earl of Morton, 'Hints offered to the consideration of Captain Cooke, Mr Bankes, Doctor Solander, and the other Gentlemen who go upon the Expedition on Board the *Endeavour*', repr in J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, 4 Vols., Volume 1: *The Voyage of the Endeavour*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1955, 514-519.

¹⁷ Douglas, 'Hints', 515.

¹⁸ Sydney Parkinson. *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in his Majesty's Ship The Endeavour*. Stanfield Parkinson. London, 1773, Australiana Facsimiles Editions A34. Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1972, 15.

much Superior to theirs and that we took no advantage of that' both the navigators and natives were able to establish cordial relations, and the explorers could conduct their business ashore without fear of attack.¹⁹ Cook was deluded into thinking that he did not exploit the islanders. After first landing the British took free reign over the local game, timber, and water without any inkling of offering some kind of recompense; in some places their 'trade' exhausted the islanders' own food supplies; and the mariners' insatiable soliciting at times offended the *tapu* women or their *arioi*. Throughout their stay in the islands Cook and his men developed ever-increasing gastronomic and carnal appetites.²⁰ While this new ethos which justified exercising their superior might did not necessarily replace the Earl of Morton's edict, before Cook had even arrived in Australian waters he came to assume that he had some discretion in carrying out his orders to abstain from bloodshed.

The subsequent British expedition to colonise New South Wales had similar instructions but with two crucial differences: Aboriginal people were no longer to be considered lords of their country, and perhaps somewhat contradictorily, they were under stricter instructions to treat the indigenes humanely.²¹ The purpose of the First Fleet was to establish a settlement so the governor, Arthur Phillip, was given territorial jurisdiction over an immense territory enabling him to impose and enforce laws, erect fortifications, and grant land to individual newcomers.²² Despite the hostilities that such a wholesale appropriation of Aboriginal land could incite, Phillip was instructed to 'conciliate their affections' and, was confident in his ability to bring the

¹⁹ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*. 4 Vols. *Volume One: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.). Hakluyt Society, London, 1955. 281.

²⁰ Anne Salmond, *Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2003, 56-107. and Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook*, Penguin Books, London, 2004 [2003], 66-9.

²¹ As governor of the proposed settlement Phillip was instructed to 'endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them'. The British maintained Cook's faith in the superiority of western arms, and harboured the same fears about the lowly sailors' and convicts' potential for unbridled violence, so Phillip was also instructed to mete out the appropriate punishment to any British 'subjects' who 'shall wantonly destroy the or give them any interruption on the exercise of their several occupations'. 'Instructions to Captain Arthur Phillip', 23 April 1787, *Historical Records of Australia*, Vol. 1, 13-4.

²² 'Governor Phillip's Second Commission', *Historical Records of Australia*, Vol. 1, 2-8.

Aborigines 'into a voluntary subjection' assuming that the Britons' 'humane' and 'honourable' conduct would extinguish the Aboriginal people's martial drives. His personal goal was to inaugurate a new phase of colonisation and prove that in the late eighteenth century 'a sanguinary temper was no longer to disgrace the European settlers in countries newly discovered'.²³ Historian John Moore argues that the command to conduct peaceful relations with the indigenous people was determined by the contemporary trial of Warren Hastings who had been impeached for his mistreatment of 'indigenous subject peoples'.²⁴

Hastings had been the governor-general of the British East India Company's government from 1772 until 1785 and exercised a 'warlike policy' in his governance, because, according to historian David Bromwich, he believed that 'a natural oriental submissiveness to despotism, ... permitted a lower standard of conduct toward Asiatic peoples'.²⁵ This view was hotly contested by Burke who charged Hastings with 'high crimes and misdemeanours' concerning corruption and despotism, and according to historian Mithi Mukherjee, 'for illegally occupying territory in India by launching aggressive offensive and criminal wars, ... treaty violations, and for open violence against native rulers and the people of India'.²⁶ Hastings' defended his actions, arguing that 'we made war with them, on just grounds surely', for a people used to living in a Hobbesian state of perpetual war, could not be pacified by treaties, but only by the 'terrors of a continued War'.²⁷

²³ Phillip, *Voyage of Governor Phillip*, 44-5, and 68.

²⁴ John Moore, *The First Fleet Marines 1786-1792*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987, 108-9.

²⁵ David Bromwich, 'Introduction: Speech in Opening the Impeachment of Warren Hastings (1788)', in Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, David Bromwich (ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000, 377-8.

²⁶ Mithi Mukherjee, 'Justice, War, and the Imperium: India and Britain in Edmund Burke's Prosecutorial Speeches in the Impeachment Trial of Warren Hastings', *Law and History Review*, Vol. 23, Iss. 3, 2005, <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lhr/23.3/mukherjee.html>>, 28 August 2006, par. 7.

²⁷ Warren Hastings to D. Anderson in G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings, first governor-general of Bengal*, R. Bentley, London, 1841, Vol. 3, 303, and Hastings to Sir John Macpherson, in Warren Hastings, *Letters to Sir John Macpherson*, Henry Dodwell (ed.), Faber and Gwyer, London, 1927, 99-100, cited in Mukherjee, 'Justice, War and the Imperium', para 31.

His trial began on 13 February 1788, within weeks of the Port Jackson colony being founded, so Phillip, as a new governor within the British Empire, would have followed the case before his departure from Plymouth. However, he would have soon realised that British legal thought did not afford Aborigines, an ostensibly savage people, the same rights as sub-continental Indians. In contrast to his earlier cited view of the laws and customs of so-called savage Americans, Burke claimed that Indians had long lived under ‘a refined, enlightened, curious, elaborate, technical Jurisprudence’ which ‘yields neither to the Jurisprudence of the Roman Law nor to the Jurisprudence of [the British] Kingdom’.²⁸ These perceived differences in the Aboriginal and Indian civilisations would have led Phillip to believe that former did not have the same rights as the latter. Further, any question that indigenous people may be entitled to the same rights as the British colonists were erased after Hastings’ acquittal in 1795. Consequently, we will see that Phillip’s humane and honourable ambitions waned as he increasingly perceived Aboriginal society as lawless, and within only a few short years he would follow Hastings’ lead by seeking to ‘infuse a universal terror’ to control the Aboriginal men.²⁹

The French explorers were also given instructions on how to investigate the indigenous people, and in these Rousseau’s influence was more apparent. According to some scholars Rousseau was determined to discover whether or not his thesis could be proven empirically and Louis de Bougainville’s depiction of Tahiti as *Nouvelle Cythère* appeared to confirm his view that savage life was ‘peaceful, beautiful, sensual and naturally wise’.³⁰ Literary scholar Rod Edmond claims this was only because descriptions of the Tahitian’s social stratification and human sacrifice which undermined Rousseau’s model were omitted from the published journal.³¹ He holds that Rousseau’s thesis was reinvigorated by

²⁸ Edmund Burke, *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 7, *India: The Hastings Trial 1789-1794*, J. Marshall (ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000, 285, cited in Mukherjee, ‘Justice, War and the Imperium’, para 35.

²⁹ Watkin Tench, 1788: *Comprising ‘A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay’ and ‘A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson’*, Tim Flannery (ed.), The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793], 168.

³⁰ Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourses from Cook to Gauguin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, 9, and Keeley, *War Before Civilisation*, 7.

³¹ Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, 9. Keeley erroneously blames Bougainville himself for the omission not the publishers of the journal. Keeley, *War Before Civilisation*, 7.

Denis Diderot in his *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1772) which juxtaposed the vices of contemporary French society with the virtues of Tahitian life. This further bolstered French expectations of finding an ideal society in the south seas, despite contrary reports of violence including the killing of Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne in New Zealand and the disappearance of Jean-François de Galaup de Lapérouse's ships after their departure from Botany Bay in 1788.³²

Nonetheless, the French explorers shared the Britons' initial confidence that they could deftly handle any indigenous hostilities. Lapérouse, Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, and Nicolas Baudin had been issued with similar instructions prepared by the Comte de Fleurieu to boldly 'attempt to investigate the customs and habits of the natives'. Like Phillip, Baudin's men were instructed to 'conciliate these uninformed people and appear among them as friends and benefactors' so that they might 'Wipe from their minds the memory of cruel adventurers who sought to stay with them only to rob or bring them into slavery'.³³ Rousseauian thought suggested that savage peoples might only resort to violence where they had previously suffered mistreatment at the hands of strangers. Joseph-Marie de Gérando believed that 'Fear and ferocity equally can put arms in the hand of the people visited', so in his instructions to the Baudin expedition suggested they discover if their reception was contingent upon 'the memories left by other strangers', and how any previous visitors had conducted themselves.³⁴ It was envisaged that the wary or fearful indigenes could be pacified by receiving various European wares, livestock, and ideas which would contribute to 'their advantage' or 'promote their pleasure'.³⁵

De Gérando also outlined how the explorers might investigate Aboriginal warfare in a degree of detail not echoed in the British instructions. Evidently the eighteenth-century debate between Rousseau and the Hobbesian

³² Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, 9 and 225-6.

³³ François Péron. *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 14, and Joseph-Marie de Gérando, *The Observation of Savage Peoples*, F.C.T. Moore (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969, 64.

³⁴ De Gérando, *Observations*, 94.

³⁵ Péron, *Voyage*, 14.

tradition was not far from de Gérando's mind as he asked: 'Are they naturally at war, or do they live ordinarily in peace? If they are naturally at war, which is the source of this mutual disposition? Is it antipathy? Is it a result of vengeance and memories? Is it rivalry? Is it the desire of conquests?' He further instructed the explorers to attempt to discover the causes, circumstance and effects of war, as well as what kind of weapons they used, if they displayed courage and how, and the way in which they arrived at an alliance or peace.³⁶

While de Gérando penned the most explicit instructions on the matter, all of the European expeditions were instructed to discover the 'natural Dispositions of the people', the physical strength of the indigenous body, and, most importantly, the nature of their 'warfare and weapons', including the causes of conflict, whether or not such violent clashes were tantamount to war, and if the people possessed 'any kind of military art'.³⁷ Such an agenda left the explorers in a curious predicament: they had to rationally and peacefully investigate the natives' aggression and warfare irrespective of how threatening the situation seemed.

iii. threatening situations

First landings were fraught affairs as the explorers could not predict the reactions of the indigenous people to the sight of European ships. They anticipated that they might receive a hostile reaction, or witness a defensive display of threats, and, as stated earlier, assumed they could deftly negotiate this and win the indigenes' affections. However, the Europeans were not prepared to find themselves in threatening situations with individuals and groups whom they considered already pacified, so were at times affronted by having to continually submit to ingratulatory acts in order to placate the natives. Further, they had not foreseen how readily they would surrender their ostensibly superior sense of reason, and resort to brutal threats and violence in order to attempt to control any tense situations.

³⁶ De Gérando, *Observations*, 92.

³⁷ Cook, *Journal*, 1: 516-7, Bruny D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia and the Pacific, 1791-1793*, Edward Duyker and Maryse Duyker (trans. and eds.), Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001, p. 294, and De Gérando, *Observations*, 78 and 92-3.

When the *Endeavour* finally sailed into Botany Bay on the 28th April 1770 after two weeks at sea, they saw a few different groups of Aboriginal people dotted along the shoreline. One party tended a fire, and as the ship tacked towards them they 'retired to a little eminence where they could conveniently see the ship'.³⁸ Another party of Aboriginal men, perched on the shore's rocks, had a more heated reaction. These men, whose black bodies were 'painted with white', were clearly perturbed by the arrival of the ship: their animated conversation was interspersed with the occasional defiant bout of brandishing their weapons at their unwelcome visitors. Cook navigated the ship towards the mouth of an inlet on the south side of the harbour, where, after lunch, they could launch a landing party of some '30 to 40' men.³⁹

Cook took Banks, the naturalist Daniel Solander, and Tupaia, a Tahitian who was accompanying the explorers to England, in his boat, but as they approached the 'small village' almost all of the Aborigines fled to the woods, leaving two lone warriors to oppose their landing.⁴⁰ The men rushed down to the rocks, shouting *warra warra wai*, and menaced the boats with their spears and woomeras.⁴¹ Cook and his men returned their cries with some offerings of nails and beads, trying in vain to gesture that all they wanted was water, and that they 'meant them no harm'.⁴² But after fifteen minutes of stalemate the British wearied of the Aborigines' defences, so a musket was fired over their heads in an endeavour to demonstrate their superior weapons.⁴³ One of the men was so alarmed that he dropped his bundle of spears, but then quickly collected both himself and his weapons, and 'renewed [his] threats and opposition'.⁴⁴

³⁸ Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey*, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 21.

³⁹ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 22.

⁴⁰ Cook, *Journals*, 1: 305 and Banks, *Australian Journey*, 22.

⁴¹ This term was later interpreted as 'be gone'. Parkinson, *Journal*, 134. Though this weapon is depicted as a short wooden sword by Sydney Parkinson, the *Endeavour's* artist, it is evident that it is a woomera that they are holding, as Banks describes it as 'a machine to throw the lance'. Banks, *Australian Journey*, 23.

⁴² Banks, *Australian Journey*, 23, and Cook, *Journals*, 1: 305.

⁴³ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 23. However, Cook states that he fired the shot between the two men. Cook, *Journals*, 1: 305, and Parkinson clarifies that the purpose was to frighten them. Parkinson, *Journal*, 134.

⁴⁴ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 23.

Since, the two Aboriginal men were evidently little convinced of the superiority of the British arms, Cook had another shot fired, though this time aimed at the elder of the two, and no longer benignly over their heads. The small shot struck the man's leg, but did little to deter his defences, in fact the bellicose man ran back to one of the huts to collect a wooden club and an oval shield. The mariners took the opportunity to land on the rock, and when the elder warrior returned, both men hurled their spears into the disembarking group, and though one fell between artist Sydney Parkinson's feet, the volleys caused no injury. Dismayed by their attackers' naïve audacity, the mariners loaded two muskets, and the men were fired upon a third time.⁴⁵ Upon this last shot being fired, the men turned to the woods where their fellows hid, gesturing for them to come to their aid shouting *hala hala mae*.⁴⁶ When they realised they were not going to be assisted, the elder defiantly hurled one last spear, and then both finally retreated back to the woods.⁴⁷

This tense scene was the *Endeavour's* first encounter with Aboriginal men. Historian Maria Nugent contends that the Aboriginal response to Cook and his men was dictated by their cultural protocols for receiving strangers. Using Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen's anthropological studies of the Arunta

⁴⁵ Both Cook and Banks state that the Aboriginal men were fired upon three times, though Parkinson only describes two shots – one that was intended to miss and one that found its target – and Matra, in his comparatively brief account, only mentions the one shot, that which drove the men away. James Matra, *A Journal of a Voyage round the World, In His Majesty's Ship Endeavour, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, and 1771: Undertaken in Pursuit of Natural Knowledge, at the Desire of the ROYAL SOCIETY*, T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, London, 1771, reproduced in Alan Frost, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton Vic., 1995, p. 58.

⁴⁶ Parkinson claims that this means 'come hither', Parkinson, *Journal*, 134.

⁴⁷ The Aboriginal men's retreat was a point of disagreement in the accounts. James Matra states that they slowly backed away after hurling a final spear in order to give the women enough time to collect their valuable cooking utensils etc. Whereas, Parkinson states that they beseeched their compatriots and then 'ran howling away', and Banks claims that the elder threw the spear and they both ran away, while Cook states that they had ran away, though Cook posits that their retreat was slow enough that one of them could have easily been captured. Given, the differences I consider the text as written the most plausible recreation, as I doubt Parkinson made up their words 'hala hala mae', and I think that Banks' account is the most detailed so the old man probably did launch a final spear; this claim supports Matra's supposition that their retreat was to distract the English from the women's escape. James Matra, *A Journal of a Voyage Round the World, In His Majesty's Ship Endeavour, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, and 1771: Undertaken in Pursuit of Natural Knowledge, at the Desire of the ROYAL SOCIETY*, T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, London, 1771, repr. in Alan Frost, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton Vic., 1995, p. 58, Parkinson, *Journal*, 134, Banks, *Australian Journey*, 23, and Cook, *Journals*, 1: 305.

people of central Australia, she posits that within Aboriginal societies uninvited guests were ignored until they conducted the necessary requests for admission to their potential hosts' country. She speculates that the Botany Bay Aborigines' resistance to the boat's landing was a threatening performance to which the strangers were expected to acquiesce before a meeting could be undertaken.⁴⁸ While Nugent's thesis is conjectural, informed by ethnographic studies of Aboriginal societies from different geographies and temporalities, it does shed light on this infamous scene, for it suggests that the Aborigines were performing well rehearsed threatening displays. However, the Europeans were no strangers to such performances, having experienced them, and comprehended their intentions before in the Pacific.⁴⁹ These acts of brinkmanship then, were to be repeated in many encounters throughout the country.

The Europeans did not always overcome the Aboriginal men's attempts to repel their landing, and on occasion surrendered to their will. Sometimes they were motivated by prudence, for example, during one of his surveys of Sydney Harbour Captain John Hunter found that every time he approached the shore 'a great many armed men appeared' and 'in a threatening manner, seemed to insist upon [his] not presuming to land'.⁵⁰ At other times it was genuine fear sparked by the Aboriginal men's martial displays which caused the explorers to give up their intentions. At Shark Bay, on the west coast of the continent, the crew of the *Géographe* were alarmed by the sudden return of one of their boats from a routine turtle fishing trip and the sailors' terrifying tales of encountering giants.

⁴⁸ Maria Nugent, *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, 13-4.

⁴⁹ Cook's men had prior experience with this kind of performance. Before arriving in New Holland, they gradually became aware that the natives would also perform an intimidating act of resistance to the European arrival, so bloodshed was inevitable. As the *Endeavour* navigated its way through the Tuamotu islands Banks observed the islanders' defensive threats and attacks on the passing vessel time and time again. He reasoned that the natives would inevitably attack and 'oblige [the Britons] to destroy some of them' and 'commit the cruelties which the Spanish and most others who have been in these seas have often' perpetrated. This dawning realisation did not mean that Banks believed that they should leave the islanders in peace, but instead that they should only inaugurate the inevitable threats and brutality upon landing when they had a compelling reason to do so. Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771*, 2 vols., J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, Vol. 1, 247.

⁵⁰ John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792*, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball, John Bach (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968 [1793], 38.

The expedition's ethnographer François Péron observed that 'Fear was still evident in the faces of the crew' who manned the boat, as they blurted out the story of their terrifying encounter with the 'extraordinarily big, strong men' who 'prevented their going ashore'. These 'hundred or more' men charged towards the hapless Frenchmen 'like furies ... brandishing their weapons' and 'utter[ing] great, long cries'. The fishermen were so terrified that they believed they had witnessed 'giants' so 'fled precipitately toward the ship'.⁵¹ This episode has been downplayed in the historiography as an example of the west coast Aborigines' 'usual hostile reception' but evidently their threatening display was extremely effective, and somewhat bolstered by the Europeans' post-medieval faith in the fantastic.⁵² Whilst they were sceptical, the French naturalists could not dismiss 'the existence of a race of giants on these shores', because there was a long tradition of myths about giants inhabiting the margins, and ostensible eye-witness accounts of these fabled creatures from earlier eighteenth-century voyages.

Historian Victor Scherb contends that in both biblical texts and early modern folklore giants could 'demarcate a cultural boundary' and 'reinforce social cohesion' by defining 'us' against 'them'. He also suggests that they prescribed normative behaviour by reportedly indulging in transgressive and barbaric acts themselves, and were 'simultaneously a remote and tangible menace'.⁵³ In the eighteenth-century this myth of giants transcended the gulf

⁵¹ François Péron and Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage of the Discovery to the Southern Lands: Book IV, Comprising Chapters XXII to XXXIV*, 2nd Ed., 1824, Christine Cornell (trans.), The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, 134, and Nicolas Baudin, *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*, Christine Cornell (trans.), Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, 506.

⁵² Colin Dyer simply holds that 'the French experienced the usual hostile reception extended in this region. Two fishing boats were prevented from going ashore by "a band of natives, all ... armed with spears, clubs and shields"'. Similarly, Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, and John West-Sooby state that 'The six-day stay at Shark Bay was most notable for an encounter with a large group of Aborigines, ... whose hostile attitude put great fear in the hearts of a French shore party and prevented them from landing'. Neither mentions the allegation that the Aboriginal men were giants. Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians, 1772-1839*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2005, 113, and Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, and John West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Matthew Flinders*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2004, 258.

⁵³ Victor I. Scherb, 'Assimilating Giants: Appropriation of Gog and Magog in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2002, 59-63. For a discussion of the history of folklore and beliefs about giants see Walter Stephens, *Giants in Those Days: Folklore, Ancient History and Nationalism*, University of Nebraska, Lincoln and London, 1989.

between folklore and science when the voyager John Byron claimed to witness a race of giants in Patagonia in 1764. The chief 'was of a gigantic stature, and seemed to realise the tales of monsters in human shape'. This account echoed Ferdinand Magellan's claim that he had discovered giants in the 'uttermost part of the world' when he explored Patagonia in 1520, so was received with some scepticism but not absolutely dismissed, as evident by its inclusion in the Comte de Buffon's *A Natural History, General and Particular*.⁵⁴

Consequently the French sailors' belief that they had been chased by giants was not entirely ludicrous, and led Péron to recall that 'the most ancient chronicles that we possess concerning this part of New Holland portray it as inhabited by a race of formidable giants', for in 1697 the Dutch navigator Willem de Vlamingh had found 'gigantic human footprints' during his exploration of the Swan River.⁵⁵ Péron considered that 'These various close encounters did not fail to be given credence by the believers in marvels (for there were a few of them among us) and seemed to them to offer, ... at least very strong probabilities in support of the existence of a race of giants on these shores'.⁵⁶ So this history of folklore certainly exacerbated the European's fearful response to the Aboriginal men's threatening performance, and occasionally fractured their façade of cool control in cross-cultural encounters.

⁵⁴ Antonio Pigafetta claimed that the tallest was 'so tall that our heads did not reach his belt' and that he was 'a size like a giant, who had a voice like a bull'. William C. Sturtevant, 'Patagonian Giants and Baroness Hyde de Neuville's Iroquois Drawings', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1980, 331. Comte de Buffon, 'A Natural History, General and Particular', [1749] in Earl W. Count (ed.), *This is Race: An Anthology Selected from International Literature on Races of Man*, Henry Schuman, New York, 1950, 15.

⁵⁵ Further, he remembered that his own compatriots Sub-Lieutenant François Heirisson and Midshipman Charles Moreau had found 'the print of a man's foot, of an extraordinary size' during their visit there, and that Louis de Freycinet had been 'seized with astonishment at the sight of a print of this nature' found in Shark Bay two years earlier. Péron acknowledged that the claims seemed 'extravagant', but held that: 'These various close encounters did not fail to be given credence by the believers in marvels (for there were a few of them among us) and seemed to them to offer, along with the double report of our fishermen, if not rigorous demonstrations, at least very strong probabilities in support of the existence of a race of giants on these shores'. Péron, *Voyage*, 144 and Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 145-6.

⁵⁶ Eventually a small group of naturalists encountered the local Aboriginal men leading Péron to dismiss the charge that the men of this coast were giants. To his eye, the tallest of the group, the one who appeared the boldest, and had 'particularly harangued' them, 'appeared to be 5 feet 4 or 5 inches tall'. The others were thought to be 'of ordinary height - even small', and the French could 'plainly detect in them that spindliness of limb and slenderness of form which characterise the various peoples of New Holland'. From this very brief encounter with the men of Shark Bay Péron claimed to have dispelled the myth of the 'existence of these new giants of the south', and

More typical of the explorers' descriptions of their own reactions to Aboriginal threats was Péron's account of a dispute with a Tasmanian man. On the 22 February 1802 at Maria Island, well into their Tasmanian sojourn, some of Baudin's naturalists attempted to interview a group of men. The exchange had been reasonably amicable, though by no means as easy and affectionate as their first encounters with the locals, but became much more tense when the Tasmanians noticed one of the French boats coasting along the shore. The men 'seemed to become bolder' and 'appeared to meditate some violence against' the strangers, but were kept 'in some awe' by the sight of the musket held by coxswain Baptiste Juste Rouget.⁵⁷

Within this growing atmosphere of distrust and anxiety Péron had a threatening encounter with one of the men who wanted his jacket and repeatedly seemed to demand it be given to him. Each time the zoologist 'refused him so positively, that [he] did not suppose that he would return to the charge'. The man's patience must have evaporated, for he suddenly 'seized hold of [Péron's] jacket' with one hand, and brandished his spear 'in a threatening manner' in the other, as he 'seemed to say, "Give it to me, or I will kill you"'. Péron weighed up the situation, and decided that the best course of action was to counter the Maria Islanders' threat with his own. Pretending 'to take his menaces as a joke', he suddenly grabbed the man's spear and turned its point away, simultaneously gesturing to his compatriot Rouget who was aiming 'his musket at' the 'savage'. To make his warning as clear as possible, Péron 'added one single word of [the man's] own language (*mata*), death'. Péron crowed that the man subsequently 'laid down his weapon', so assumed that his threat had been comprehended, although he was not able to fully bask in the glory of his brave performance because the bested man did so 'with as much indifference as if he had done nothing to offend' the Frenchman.⁵⁸

The European's cool demeanour was shattered, however, by another Tasmanian who snuck up behind him and suddenly wrenched the naturalist's

recognised that they were just ordinary men, like those throughout the rest of Australia. Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 145-6.

⁵⁷ Péron, *Voyage*, 219-20.

⁵⁸ Péron, *Voyage*, 220.

gold earring from his earlobe. Péron later sulked about ‘how unjust and treacherous [the Tasmanians’] conduct was towards [them]’, speculating that had it not been for ‘Rouget and his musket’ the Frenchmen would have ‘fallen victim to the ferocity of these savage people’.⁵⁹ This encounter, which had occurred late in their stay in Tasmania, led Péron to rethink his initial positive impression of indigenous people in general and rebuke Rousseau.⁶⁰ He now decided that the Tasmanians’ ‘treacherous’ behaviour could be expected from ‘all savage or uncivilised nations’, and claimed that in ‘those very places, where the inhabitants are said to possess the greatest gentleness and mildness of character, unprotected Europeans have experienced many great dangers, and very often fallen victims to their own generous confidence’.⁶¹ In answer to de Gérando’s question, Péron had concluded that it was ferocity not fear which motivated the indigenes’ hostile behaviour. However, despite Péron’s outrage at the Tasmanians’ conduct, the Europeans were not above behaving in a perfidious manner themselves, and on occasion resorted to intimidating acts in order to further their aims. One such example is Matthew Flinders’ kidnapping of a young man at Caledon Bay on 7 February 1803.

Shortly after entering the estuary at Blue Mud Bay in northern Australia Flinders established a camp for his botanists and artists to use as a base during their explorations. A group of Aborigines soon met with the Englishmen and the navigator believed that cordial relations had been established. Then one afternoon while the strangers were botanizing with the assistance of the locals, an Aboriginal man suddenly snatched a hatchet from one of Flinders’ servants; his escape closely followed by the Britons’ gunfire. Later, a musket was also stolen, only to be later returned broken. After the theft of yet another hatchet, according to Anthony Brown, ‘Flinders decide[d] to follow Captain Cook’s example and take two hostages’.⁶² The navigator indicated to the first victim

⁵⁹ His petulance is revealed in his preface to this comment: ‘Let us not recollect that these men had been loaded with presents by us; ... [and] let us also remember that we had given way to all their fancies and caprices, without requiring any return for all our gifts’. Péron, *Voyage*, 221.

⁶⁰ His first impressions that the Tasmanians were peaceful noble savages will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁶¹ Péron, *Voyages*, 221.

⁶² Anthony J. Brown, *Ill-Starred Captains: Flinders and Baudin*, rev’d ed., Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2004 [2000], 312.

that the younger would be freed when the stolen item was returned, and then released him to spread the word. The lone captive, 'a youth of fourteen named Woga', was taken to 'the place most frequented by Indians' so that they could make the exchange, but the Aborigines maintained that 'the thief Yehangaree, had been beaten and was gone away'. Ignoring this explanation Flinders intended to carry out his threat to take the boy, so 'Woga was carried aboard' the *Investigator* despite 'a great deal of crying, in-treating (sic), threatening and struggling on his part'.⁶³

The next day the youth was bound and taken ashore again, and after fruitlessly crying out to Flinders' Aboriginal guide Bongaree for help, he eventually 'became quiet', so the Englishman 'left him bound to a tree, eating fish and rice'. Perhaps intending to capture their own hostage, 'a number of natives' unsuccessfully attempted to lure some of the botanists 'into the wood', and as their quarry made for the boat 'the natives closed in upon them, with poised spears and every appearance of intended mischief'. So the marines 'fired at each of the two foremost, which put them to flight'.⁶⁴ While none of them dropped to the ground Flinders could only assume that 'one or both of them must have been wounded' for the musket was 'loaded with buck shot'. The next day, perhaps concluding that injuring two men was enough punishment for the theft of a hatchet, Flinders decided to release his hostage. While he would have liked to keep the boy because he might provide useful information, he realised that Woga's 'detention ... had caused some annoyance to [him], and mischief to his countrymen', and worried that 'carrying him away, might be an injury to those who should come after'. Although the fourteen year old 'begged hard to be released, promising with tears in his eyes, to bring back the axe' Flinders believed that 'upon the whole, [he] had not fared amiss', so did not consider that he had committed any great injury by kidnapping the youth as a threatening inducement for the return of his stolen property.⁶⁵

This is an example of what anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere refers to as 'the paradox of civilisation', in which 'implicit in the thrust of civilisation

⁶³ Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, G & W Nicol, Pall Mall, 1814, Vol. 2, 208.

⁶⁴ Flinders, *Voyage*, 2: 209.

is a dark side'.⁶⁶ In *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* Obeyesekere detailed Cook's increasingly barbaric use of kidnapping and the corporal punishment of alleged thieves in the Pacific, arguing that it indicated Cook's shift from what the anthropologist refers to as the Prospero myth-model to that of Kurtz: Cook set out to be a 'harbinger of civilisation' but turned into the opposite by 'go[ing] native and becom[ing] the very savage he despises'.⁶⁷ Even Cook's compatriots found his punishments severe: William Bayly, Cook's astronomer, recorded that 'whenever we catch a Thief he is punished with a severe flogging and if he is a man of Property Captain Cook obliges them to ransom him with Hogs and Fruit, and in some instances may be said to have been guilty of great cruelty'.⁶⁸ Flinders employed a similar strategy, ostensibly benevolently correcting the Arnhem Land Aborigines' tendency to steal by using arbitrary violence to temporarily kidnap and wound the locals. However, while his actions certainly traumatised his victim, they were in some regard merely threats. Like Cook and Péron, and the warriors the explorers encountered throughout the country, Flinders' aggressive acts were mainly performances suggesting a greater harm which was not in the end inflicted. In contrast to later years, during this era of exploration actual physical violence was a rarity, and fatal bloodshed was mainly limited to the violent clashes of the First Fleet's convicts and marines with the Aboriginal men of the Sydney area.

iv. violent clashes

In the beginning it seemed as though governor Phillip could achieve his paradoxical aims to take possession of Aboriginal land and treat the natives honourably and humanely. Although the expedition was essentially martial in nature, for it was governed by a naval officer, had a marine officer as judge-advocate, and included four companies of marines, historian John Connor

⁶⁵ Flinders, *Voyage*, 2: 210.

⁶⁶ Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*, 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997 [1992], 13.

⁶⁷ Obeyesekere, *Apotheosis*, 11 & 29-31.

⁶⁸ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*, 4 Vols., Volume Three: *The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 2 Parts. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Part 1, 132, n. 3, cited in Obeyesekere, *Apotheosis*, 30.

contends that compared to other British colonies it was relatively peaceful.⁶⁹ He suggests this was due to Phillip's determination to abide by his instructions to 'endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections'. Phillip had been ordered to command all British 'subjects to live in amity and kindness' with the Aboriginal people and if any 'shall wantonly destroy them, or give them unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations' he was to 'cause such offenders to be brought to punishment according to the degree of the offence'.⁷⁰ Phillip appeared to be able to enforce this edict amongst the marines for there are few records of them killing Aboriginal people, though of course as Connor points out it is difficult to ascertain whether or not this was genuinely the case as no Briton would risk being punished by admitting to harming any Aborigines.⁷¹ Yet, Phillip could not prevent the violent clashes between the Eora people and the convicts.

The first recorded conflict happened in March 1788 when several convicts returned to the settlement with injuries. 'One in particular [had been] dangerously wounded with a spear, the others very much beaten and bruised by the natives'. The men 'denied giving any provocation to the natives' but Collins attests that it was 'difficult to believe them'. Collins and Phillip were sure that some of the convicts had beaten some Aboriginal men, because Phillip met a group from Farm Cove who he was already acquainted with and they suddenly seemed 'shy' and 'afraid' to meet him. When one finally 'did venture to approach, [he] pointed to some marks upon his shoulders making signs they were caused by blows being given with a stick'. Collins' scepticism about the convicts' claim was bolstered by the fact that Phillip had only recently declared that 'any act of cruelty to the natives ... would be subject to criminal

⁶⁹ John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838*. UNSW Press, Kensington, 2002, 10, & 24-6.

⁷⁰ 'Instructions to Captain Arthur Phillip', *HRA*, 1, 13-4.

⁷¹ Connor details the punishments dealt to convicts who committed crimes against Aboriginal people. Connor, *Australian Frontier Wars*, 26-7.

prosecution', so he believed that the convicts were confident that 'the natives themselves, however injured, could not contradict their assertions'.⁷²

Then in late May another convict was brought to the hospital 'dangerously wounded with a barbed spear' and his companion presumed killed because his clothes were found 'torn, bloody, and pierced with spears'. A week later, two convicts had been killed while cutting rushes, their bodies 'pierced through in many places with spears, and the head of one beaten to a jelly'. Though Collins had more sympathy for these men, he did think that they had fallen sacrifice to their 'own folly and the barbarity of the natives', for the rush-cutters had previously been found to steal an Aboriginal canoe, and Worgan reported a rumour that 'the Murder of the two abovementioned Convicts was an act of Revenge' for the killing of '2 Natives' earlier that same day. Over the next five months more convicts were wounded, and the British realised that they would be molested by the Aborigines 'whenever they chanced to meet any of them straggling and unarmed'.⁷³

Phillip attempted to investigate the circumstances of these attacks on convicts, though he tended to sympathise with the Aborigines and assume that the errant convicts had brought the attacks upon themselves through their perfidious depredations. Marine Lieutenant Captain Watkin Tench confessed that he at first blamed the Aboriginal attacks on 'a spirit of malignant levity', but then realised that 'the evils [the British] had experienced' were a result of 'the unprovoked outrages committed upon [the Aborigines] by unprincipled individuals' who 'plundered ... their fishing-tackle and weapons of war'.⁷⁴ Connor suggests that the officers had no real understanding of the Aborigines'

⁷² David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Brian Fletcher (ed.), A.H & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1975, 18-19.

⁷³ Collins, *Account*, 24 & 32; Tench, 1788, 55-6; and George Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon*, Library Council of New South Wales in association with the Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1978, 50-1.

⁷⁴ Tench, 1788, 91.

motives and their reasoning reflected their bias against the convicts.⁷⁵ However, the British could not continue to blame the convicts indefinitely.

After a few months the First Fleet officers became increasingly perplexed by the reason for the 'unabated animosity [which] continued to prevail between the natives and [them]'.⁷⁶ Governor Phillip sympathetically speculated that the Aborigines' 'dislike to the Europeans is probably increased by discovering that [they] intend to remain among them', and wondered if it was competition over resources such as fishing grounds which triggered indigenous ire.⁷⁷ Captain John Hunter was less generous in his assessment and attributed it to their treachery. On the 17 August 1788 while he was surveying Sydney harbour he saw a group of Aboriginal men who appeared friendly and gestured for him to land near them. As the marines rowed towards them one suddenly hurled his spear 'which passed about six feet over [their] heads'.⁷⁸ Hunter was dumbfounded by this attack, declaring 'What reasons they could have had for this treacherous kind of conduct, I am wholly at a loss to guess, for nothing hostile or mischievous had appeared on our part'. Although he was not injured, Hunter was so affronted that he 'immediately snatched up [his] gun' and was 'determined to discharge amongst them, and should probably have killed one of their number, if [his] gun had not missed fire'. His companion, Lieutenant George Johnston, quickly fired into the bushes where the Aboriginal men had

⁷⁵ Connor suggests that these attacks were also 'revenge killings for deaths "blamed" on British sorcery and that, to this extent, the Eora considered the British as part of their society'. Their prejudice was certainly palpable, as evident in the difference in surgeon Arthur Bowes Smyth's accounts of attacks on a convict compared with that of a sailor. On the 8 March 1788 he blandly mentions that he 'Drank Tea wt. Major Ross & learned from him that the Natives had kill'd several of the Convicts who had elop'd from Port Jackson'. whereas the next day he was more effusive in his sympathy for the sailor Philip Screven. Screven, who had been missing, was found 'half starved & perished & quite naked'. Bowes Smyth states that the man had 'fell in wt. a party of the Natives who stript him and pelted him wt. stones' and also believes the man's story that they would 'have murther'd him but he ran into a swamp up to his Neck & there lay conceal'd among the rushes'. Connor, *Australian Frontier Wars*, 28 and Arthur Bowes Smyth, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon on Lady Penryth 1787-89*, Australian Documents Library, Sydney, 1979, 77.

⁷⁶ Tench, 1788, 93.

⁷⁷ Phillip, *Voyage of Governor Phillip*, 36.

⁷⁸ Hunter, *An Account*, 56.

retreated, but Hunter lamented that ‘as it was charged only with small shot, [he thought] it could not have hurt any of them’.⁷⁹

This incident raises some interesting questions about the extent of Phillip’s control over his marines. He had forbidden his men from harming Aboriginal people, leading Connor to conclude that ‘the only certain Eora death’ happened in December 1790, more than two years after this incident. Connor does not absolve all Europeans from initiating hostile acts, however, for he speculates that ‘it is impossible to know the number of casualties from the French shooting at Botany Bay’.⁸⁰ Inga Clendinnen also assumes that Phillip’s benevolent accommodation of the Aborigines was respected and his orders followed. She holds that it was only after his departure in December 1792 that British attitudes towards the treatment of Aborigines changed, as from this point ‘they visited ferocious collective punishments, often murderous, on Australians suspected of offences against whites. ... White offences against blacks would increasingly go unnoticed, and unpunished’.⁸¹

These arguments are respectful of the historical records but could be more interrogative. It seems implausible, for instance, that only one Aboriginal man might have been killed by the British marines in such a long period of time given Hunter’s instinctive desire to seek retribution and kill his Aboriginal attackers for hurling a spear six feet above his head. Further, from the time of the settlement’s inception the First Fleet officers were confident that the Aborigines were aware of the effectiveness of European weapons, as surgeon John White stated that ‘they know and dread the superiority of our arms’ and ‘have discovered a dislike to a musquet’.⁸² Marine Lieutenant Ralph Clark concurred observing that while the warriors might attack unarmed men ‘the[y] never Meddle with a red Coat’.⁸³ One has to wonder how the indigenes

⁷⁹ Hunter, *An Account*, 56-7.

⁸⁰ Connor, *Australian Frontier Wars*, 26.

⁸¹ She also concurs that the first British killing of an Aborigine happened in December 1790. Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, 193-5 & 217-8.

⁸² John White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*. Alec H. Chisholm (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, 111.

⁸³ Letter from Ralph Clark to Hartwell Esqr, 1st October 1788, in Ralph Clark, *The Journal and Letters of Lt Ralph Clark 1787-1792*, G. Fildon and R.J. Ryan (eds.), Australian Document Library, Sydney, 1981, 271.

developed such a fear if they had never suffered its fatal consequences at the hands of the First Fleet marines until December 1790. Finally, it was not unusual for the British to quickly resort to firepower: we have already seen that Cook had shot at two men on his first day in Botany Bay and Flinders on his fifth day at Caledon Bay. So perhaps there were more incidents in which the marines' 'gun[s] had not missed fire' and the violent clashes were not solely between Aborigines and convicts? Irrespective of who the instigators of the violence were, the governor decided he could not continue to tolerate such attacks within his colony, so eventually responded to Aboriginal violence with his own.

His first strike occurred in late October 1788. After the death of one more convict, and the attack on another the governor finally opted to take more decisive action: leading 'an armed party' to the 'spot' where the latter was wounded he had his marines fire into the bushes where some noises were heard, presuming that betrayed the hiding place of some Aboriginal people. The aim of this random assault was to 'compel them to keep at a greater distance from the settlement'.⁸⁴ Evidently it did not work for the Aborigines continued to occupy their lands around the colony. On 18 December a large group of warriors had 'assembled in force near the brick-kilns' terrifying the workers so that reports of their number varied from 50 to 2000.⁸⁵ The recent disappearance of 'a soldier and several convicts' might have exacerbated British fears, but the group could hardly have been such a formidable force because they were driven away by some convicts 'pointing their spades and shovels at them, in the manner of guns'.⁸⁶

Even though the Aboriginal people were easily dispatched, a jaded Phillip became 'tired of this state of petty warfare and endless uncertainty', perhaps believing himself to have been transported to Hobbesian state of nature.

⁸⁴ Collins, *Account*, 36.

⁸⁵ The discrepancies in the reports of the number of Aboriginal men assembled illustrates the Britons' terror, so indicates how tense the situation was. Baudin reported a similar discrepancy in the number of aforementioned 'giants' who ostensibly charged down the beach terrifying the French sailors. He stated that 'It is probable that they so scared our men, that the latter were unable to judge the number properly, some putting it as high as two hundred and those less frightened putting it at thirty or forty'. Baudin, *Journal*, 506.

⁸⁶ Tench, *1788*, 93-4.

In order to rectify this state of affairs he took the 'decisive measure' of 'capturing some of them and retaining them by force' in order to 'inflame the rest to signal vengeance ... or else induce an intercourse'.⁸⁷ This resulted in the capture of Arabanoo, and then later Colby and Bennelong, actions which did not satisfactorily fulfil either goal, so the 'uncertainty' continued. Phillip's most striking assault, however, would not happen until December 1790, upon the death of his gamekeeper, a circumstance which led to the only reported death of an Aborigine during the First Fleet's commission.

Phillip's gamekeeper, John McEntire, had long been suspected of mistreating Aboriginal people because of how they reacted to him, even Bennelong who 'would not suffer his approach', but he nonetheless considered himself to be on friendly terms with them. During a hunting expedition with a marine sergeant and two other convicts, he was awoken at night by a sound in the bushes. Looking around he noticed that they were being stalked by a small party of Aboriginal men, but was relieved when he recognised them and assured his companions that there was nothing to worry about. As he was conversing with them 'in their own language' one of the Aboriginal men, 'without giving the least warning', suddenly speared him in his left side. McEntire staggered back to camp crying "'I am a dead man'" and his compatriots tended to him by breaking off the spear-shaft, leaving the head in the wound, and carrying him back to Sydney. Some Aboriginal people visited the unfortunate man in order to advise on how best to treat the injury and the British noticed that they already knew about the incident and admitted that the perpetrator was Pemulwuy, a Bideegal man from Botany Bay. After 11 days McEntire died due to blood loss and a punctured lung, but not before confessing to 'crimes of the deepest dye'. Tench took the opportunity to interrogate McEntire on his reputed mistreatment of the Aborigines, though doubted the dying man's vociferous denials.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Tench, 1788, 94.

⁸⁸ In a footnote Tench states 'From the aversion uniformly shown by all the natives to this unhappy man, he had long been suspected by us of having in his excursions shot and injured them'. So Tench chose his 'moment of contrition' to interview him, and he declared that he had only once wounded a man in self-defense. Tench reported that 'most people doubted the truth of this relation, from his general character and other circumstances'. Tench, 1788, 135, 148, 165, and 166.

Despite British suspicions about McEntire, this murder was the governor's tipping point: he declared there was no excuse for this killing and, after 17 British deaths in almost three years, that it was time for retribution. In a passionate speech to Tench he ordered him to capture 'two natives as prisoners; and put to death ten; ... destroy all weapons of war; ... cut off and bring in the heads of the slain; for which purpose hatchets and bags would be furnished'. After this outburst, he asked Tench's opinion, and the marine captain convinced him to lighten the punishment. The next day the governor issued the following proclamation:

several tribes of the natives still continuing to throw spears at any man they meet unarmed, by which several have been killed or dangerously wounded, the governor, in order to deter the natives from such practices in future, has ordered out a party to search for the man who wounded the convict McEntire in so dangerous a manner ... A party, consisting of two captains, two subalterns, and forty privates, with a proper number of non-commissioned officers from the garrison, with three days provisions &c., are to be ready to march tomorrow morning at daylight, in order to bring in six of those natives who reside near the head of Botany Bay; or, if that should be found impracticable, to put that number to death.⁸⁹

Despite knowing the identity of McEntire's murderer, Phillip decided that punishing random tribesmen was the best course of action as his aim was to 'infuse a universal terror [in order to prevent] farther mischief'.⁹⁰ Even though collective punishment of British subjects was illegal, Phillip's reprisal was intended as a harsh message to the Aborigines, warning them against attacking the colonists, because after almost three years of colonization the Aboriginal people had not yet recognized the authority of their 'new masters'.⁹¹ Fortunately for the proposed random victims of British justice, the expedition failed to find and capture a single Bideegal man. Unfortunately, upon their return to Port Jackson the troop vented their frustrations over their arduous and futile

⁸⁹ Tench, 1788, 167.

⁹⁰ Tench, 1788, 169, 176-7, 167, 168.

⁹¹ Moses discusses collective punishment in his examination of Native Police in the nineteenth century stating that 'Aborigines were, after all, British subjects and could not legally be shot on sight or subjected to group punishment'. And Tench had earlier claimed upon Phillip taking possession that the Governor's aim was to 'bring about an intercourse between its old and new masters'. A.D. Moses, 'An antipodean genocide? The origins of the genocidal moment in the colonization of Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. II, No. 1, 2000, 101, and Tench, 1788, 40.

campaign on the Port Jackson people. Finding 'two natives ... robbing a potato garden', a small party of soldiers gave chase as soon as the thieves ran away. By the time they caught up with the men 'the ardour of the soldiers transported them so far that, instead of capturing the offenders, they fired in among them' resulting in the death of a man named Bangai. Reflecting on this incident Tench confessed that 'if we could not retaliate on the murderer of McEntire, we found no difficulty in punishing offences committed within our own observation'.⁹² Like Hunter before them, the marines did not hesitate to fire upon Aboriginal people when their passions demanded it, although, tragically this time their guns did not misfire.

Of course the First Fleet was not the only expedition to clash violently with Aboriginal men, nor indeed the only one to fire upon and kill a man. As we have seen in earlier chapters Marion-Dufresne's men killed a Tasmanian when they were attacked with a volley of stones, and most voyagers at one stage or another shot at indigenous warriors in retaliation of an attack. Yet, the First Fleet was the only expedition in this early period to consider collective punishment, and to attempt to launch an assault on Aboriginal men in an attempt to 'infuse a universal terror'. This was due to their much longer commission and contact with indigenous people. Other expeditions, which had much shorter sojourns with different Aboriginal groups, were at times able to form more peaceful relations with the locals, and perceived their society to be ideally pacific, exemplifying Rousseau's notions of a golden age.

v. most perfect harmony

Cook is famed for his evaluation that the 'Natives of New Holland ... [were] far happier than [the] Europeans', for he believed that 'They live[d] in a Tranquillity which [was] not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition'. He also concluded that they were not 'a warlike People', in fact he thought 'them a timorous and inoffensive race, no way inclinable to cruelty'.⁹³ He is said to have reflected Rousseauian ideas on the nature of savage society, and respected the

⁹² Tench, *1788*, 168. and 176-7.

⁹³ Cook, *Journals*, 1: 399 & 396.

austerity and stoicism of their simple lives. Art historian Bernard Smith thinks that Cook was sympathetic to the ‘philosophy of hard primitivism’ which portrayed the state of nature ‘as a renunciation of the luxuries and excesses of civilisation’ and where ‘the virtues of endurance and courage were called into continuous operation by the vicissitudes of daily life’.⁹⁴ However, he was hardly effusive in his praise; unlike d’Entrecasteaux’s naturalists who discovered that ‘most perfect harmony’, expounded by the esteemed philosopher, during their second stay to Tasmania in 1793.

On the morning of the 8 February the naturalist Jacques de Labillardière, accompanied by the gardener Félix de La Haye and two sailors set off by foot on a two day excursion towards Port D’Entrecasteaux.⁹⁵ Even though their journey was very taxing the men still enjoyed their foray as they found a bounteous ‘bank of oysters’, crossed a ‘spacious plain’, and discovered a ‘great lake’ which bordered on the sea. On the first evening they slept out in the open, sheltered by the ‘large trunks of trees, that lay on the ground’, and kept themselves warm by kindling a large fire.⁹⁶ The next morning Labillardière and La Haye woke early, and while their companions still slept set off to collect some *mimosa* specimens. After wandering for ‘at least a couple of miles’ the two men heard ‘human voices’, so crept towards the sound. On the near shore of the lake they saw a group of Tasmanians fishing, but remembering that they were unarmed and fearing the worst, the two naturalists decided to return to their companions to bolster their numbers and weapons before making their presence known to the natives.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Bernard Smith, *European Visions and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, and New York, 1960, 126-7. See also Glyndwr Williams, ‘“Far more happier than we Europeans”: Reaction to the Australian Aborigines on Cook’s Voyage’, *Historical Studies*. Vol. 19, No. 77, 1981, 499-512.

⁹⁵ Labillardière uses the name Port Dentrecasteaux to refer to the D’Entrecasteaux Channel which separates Bruny Island from the south-eastern Tasmanian coast. This channel had been discovered during their earlier visit to the region in May 1792. Jacques de Labillardière, *Voyage in Search of La Pérouse, performed by order of the constituent assembly, during the years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1794*, John Stockdale, Piccadilly, London, 1800, 293. See also Edward and Maryse Duyker, ‘Introduction’, in Bruny D’Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia and the Pacific, 1791-1793*, Edward Duyker and Maryse Duyker (trans. and eds.), Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001, xxvii.

⁹⁶ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 293-4.

⁹⁷ D’Entrecasteaux’s account, albeit derived second hand, differs from Labillardière’s. He states that upon hearing the natives ‘They ignored their normal inclinations, since prudence would

After collecting the sailors and loading their muskets Labillardière and La Haye set out towards the lake, but after ‘only a few steps’ they met the group of men, women and children. Labillardière could not detect ‘any hostile designs’ and after what appeared to be an elaborate welcome from their hosts all members rushed forward to greet each other. The Frenchmen then invited the Tasmanian men to sit by the fire they had lit the previous night, and here the men told them, by way of gesture, that they had watched the mariners as they slept, having been alerted to their presence by the fire.⁹⁸ The fact that the Tasmanians had not ‘slaughter[ed their] sleeping compatriots’ while they were vulnerably unarmed led the French to assume that ‘kindness and gentleness seemed to be the basis of their character’.⁹⁹

Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, the sub-lieutenant on the *Espérance*, claimed that ‘this people, undoubtedly the closest to the primitive state of nature, seemed to enjoy all the good fortune associated with it’.¹⁰⁰ The commander of the *Recherche*, Alexandre D’Hesmivy d’Auribeau, also considered a ‘natural goodness’ to be one of these benefits, for, in his view, their mores indicated that ‘they [knew] no evil’, perhaps referring to Rousseau’s aforementioned criticism of Hobbes’ belief that savage man ‘naturally evil’.¹⁰¹ La Motte du Portail assumed that ‘Only warfare could disturb the peaceful sameness of their days’, but assumed that this was unknown to them. He presumed that due to the ‘rudeness and feebleness of their arms’ their spears

have cautioned them to reach for their guns and rejoin their companions. The natives followed them. They were beckoned to leave their weapons. They dropped on the ground the kind of javelin. ... Our gentlemen also parted with their guns’. Not only does Labillardière state that they did return for their compatriots and weapons, but he states that he did not see the Tasmanian weapons until after their first meeting was over, and the natives collected them from the woods just before escorting the Frenchmen back to their ship. D’Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, 141.

⁹⁸ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 298.

⁹⁹ Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, ‘Journal of La Motte Du Portail (*Espérance*)’, in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny d’Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 304 and 299.

¹⁰⁰ La Motte du Portail, ‘Journal’, 299-300.

¹⁰¹ His thesis was based on his observation that they must not fear anyone in the group, because the parents happily allowed the strangers to hold their infants, and the children to cavort with the Frenchmen. D’Hesmivy d’Auribeau, ‘D’Hesmivy d’Auribeau’s first meeting with the Natives, 1793’, in Plomley and Piard-Bernier, *The General*, 283 and Rousseau, *Discourse*, 35.

could only be used for hunting, so they seemed to live in the ‘most perfect harmony’. He speculated that:

A warlike people in the habit of fighting with their neighbours, on seeing people as extraordinary as Europeans, would not fail to come armed and on the defensive. These people had done nothing of the kind; for our first meeting there had been a basis of confidence which they had always maintained.¹⁰²

Consequently, on this south-eastern coast of Tasmania d’Entrecasteaux’s men believed they had found the greatly mythologised noble savage, familiar to them from the writing of Rousseau himself. La Motte du Portail claimed that the Tasmanians ‘offer strong proof in support of the idea which the immortal J.J. Rousseau has developed in his discourse on the origin of inequality of conditions’.¹⁰³ None of their subsequent encounters led these Frenchmen to re-evaluate this characteristic of the Tasmanians’ society, for they were only able to remain a little longer and lamented that they had not met the indigenes earlier. Péron on the other hand, had a similar first encounter with the Tasmanians, but as we have already seen, out-stayed his welcome long enough to eventually incite some hostility which he interpreted as treachery.

Like d’Entrecasteaux’s men, Péron beheld an Arcadian vision when he first saw the Tasmanian coast. Despite the brisk temperatures he stood on the deck of the *Géographe* transfixed by the sight of the ‘lofty mountains’, the inland plains which rose ‘in amphitheatres’ over the whole island and the ‘immense forests’.¹⁰⁴ His admiration of the landscape grew as the ships sailed into the Dentrecasteaux Channel in search of fresh water. The lush green of the vegetation and prodigious mountains, combined with the beautiful plumes of the local parrots and majestic swans led him to declare that it was the ‘most picturesque and pleasant’ place they had seen during their long voyage.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² La Motte du Portail, ‘Journal’, 300.

¹⁰³ La Motte du Portail, ‘Journal’, 302. Plomley and Piard-Bernier consider that the influence of Rousseau on d’Entrecasteaux’s men was significant, for they were not only familiar with his texts on humanity, but ‘sought the Tasmanians eagerly as friends whenever they had the opportunity of doing so’. Plomley and Piard-Bernier. *The General*, 262.

¹⁰⁴ Péron, *Voyage*, 171.

¹⁰⁵ Péron, *Voyage*, 172.

As the ships approached the shore two men fleetingly appeared on the beach, but disappeared as the ships neared. Then, shortly after the Frenchmen disembarked, another two men appeared. The braver of the two immediately bounded down the rise to greet them. This young man's athleticism impressed Péron for he 'seemed rather to spring from the top of the rock than to descend from it'.¹⁰⁶ The second man was also notable because his 'physiognomy had nothing fierce or austere' about it. The men had not appeared remotely hostile or wary, but showed much interest in the Frenchmen's bodies and belongings. After this meeting the naturalists wandered further afield and eventually came across some huts. During their examination of these the owners returned, and, instead of attacking the interlopers, 'shouted for joy' and gestured for the strangers to sit with them by the fire as they prepared their meal. The afternoon passed very sociably, and afterwards Péron sentimentally reflected that:

The confidence which the inhabitants shewed us, the affectionate testimonies of goodwill which we could not but understand, the sincerity of their demonstrations, the frankness of their manners, the affecting ingenuousness of their caresses, all seemed to unit in developing the kindest and most interesting affection and friendship.¹⁰⁷

Recalling the work of Rousseau he happily believed that he just 'saw realised with inexpressible pleasure, those charming descriptions of the happiness and simplicity of a state of nature, of which I have so often read, and enjoyed in idea'.¹⁰⁸ Of course as we have already seen, Péron did not maintain this belief for very long, and soon recast the Tasmanians as treacherous. The English were also at times struck by the Aborigines' peaceful conduct, though did not necessarily perceive their actions as the ideas of Rousseau made realised, so were more reserved in their appraisals.

Flinders acknowledged that he had expected a hostile reception from the natives when he charted northern Australia, stating 'I had been taught by the Dutch accounts to expect that the inhabitants of Carpentaria were ferocious, and

¹⁰⁶ Péron, *Voyage*, 173.

¹⁰⁷ Péron, *Voyage*, 180-1.

¹⁰⁸ Péron, *Voyage*, 181.

armed with bows and arrows as well as spears'.¹⁰⁹ Willem Jansz had lost a man in a skirmish when he navigated the Batavia river in 1606 and Jan Carstensz had also had a hostile encounter when he investigated the same area in 1623.¹¹⁰ However, Jansz had not realised that the Torres Strait separated the north coast of Australia from Papua New Guinea so his account conflated at least three different peoples: Papuans, Torres Strait Islanders, and Cape York Aborigines. In contrast to the Dutch experiences, Flinders found the people to be 'timid' and 'desirous to avoid intercourse with strangers', and in his single encounter at Horse-shoe Islander noted that 'certainly there was nothing ferocious in their conduct'.¹¹¹ Similarly, during his stay near Cape Keppel he found that the indigenes 'at first menaced [his] people with their spears' but quickly 'laid aside their arms, and accompanied the sailors to the ship in a good-natured manner'.¹¹² However, in contrast to the French, he did not elaborate on the matter nor discuss the implications of their pacific mores on society and laws. In fact his only evaluation was to sharply note that the Carpentarians' 'spears were too heavy and clumsily made to be dangerous as offensive weapons'.¹¹³ He unromantically attributed their peaceful conduct to an ignorance of warfare, but others would see it differently, appreciating it as a display of admirable martial protocols.

Hunter, who, as we have seen, perceived the designs painted on the Aboriginal men's bodies as military cross belts, obviously had a keen eye for any military parallels in the indigenes' practices, so when he encountered a group near Sydney harbour he compared their actions to that of western soldiers. He observed that the men 'drew themselves up in a line on the beach' and that 'their disposition was as regular as any well disciplined troops could have been'. He also noticed that 'each man had a green bough in his hand' so

¹⁰⁹ Flinders, *Voyage*, 2: 146.

¹¹⁰ Carstensz presumed that the hostility of some of the 'black men or savages' and not others was due to the fact that the former were 'acquainted with muskets, of which they would have seem to have experienced the fatal effect when in 1606 the men of the *Duyfken* made a landing here'. Jan Carstensz, 'Journal kept by Jan Carstensz on his voyage to New Guinea, 1623', in J.E. Heeres, *The Part Borne by the Dutch in the Discovery of Australia*, Luzac and Co., London, 1899, 43.

¹¹¹ Flinders, *Voyage*, 2: 146.

¹¹² Flinders, *Voyage*, 2: 27.

¹¹³ Flinders, *Voyage*, 2: 146.

interpreted it 'as a sign of friendship', perhaps assuming it was an antipodean 'olive-branch', a symbol of peace and goodwill since biblical times.¹¹⁴ Fortunately, Hunter was not proved wrong in this assumption, for reading symbolic gestures could be a dangerous affair, as discovered by Marion-Dufresne in Tasmania. He mistook lighting a 'small pile of wood' with a firebrand which had been offered him as a 'ceremony necessary to prove that he had come with pacific intentions' but upon lighting it realised that it 'an acceptance of defiance, or a declaration of war', for he was immediately showered by a volley of stones.¹¹⁵ But this ostensible symbol of peace, was not the only feature which Hunter interpreted as analogous to western military traditions. He also noticed that they posted 'centinels' which he supposed 'were ordered there to watch all [the Britons'] motions', and the purpose of the party was 'entirely for the defence of the women, if any insult had been offered them'.¹¹⁶

Hunter appreciated this encounter because in their actions the spirit of martial honour, valuing their well-ordered form and demeanour as examples of military strategy and chivalry.¹¹⁷ His parallels with western military traditions, however, were very unusual. His description of their regimented order resembled what Harry Holbert Turney-High referred to as the 'military

¹¹⁴ Worgan claims that 'these Warlike Heroes' each had 'a green Bough in his Hand' and that it was 'an Emblem of Peace among these People', but he most likely inferred this from their non-aggressive demeanour and biblical traditions rather than any knowledge of Aboriginal symbology. In Genesis viii. 11 the dove returns to Noah 'carrying a bough of an olive tree'. Later the olive-branch was used as a token of peace as opposed to the laurel wreath symbolising victory: 'Yet he did make that Warre rather with an Olive-branch, then a Laurel-branch in his Hand more desiring Peace than Victorie'. Worgan, *Journal*, 14, and Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, Jerry Weinberger (ed.), Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1996 [1622], 29.

¹¹⁵ Julien Corzet, *Journal of the Voyage of M. Marion Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahtiti and New Zealand*, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772*, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 25.

¹¹⁶ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 40.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion on the endurance of male codes of honour and chivalry in eighteenth-century Europe see Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honour in Modern France*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, 25.

horizon', and was thought the domain of soldiers not 'primitive' warriors.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the warrior has been conceived in opposition to the soldier: the term defines primitive fighting-men for whom 'the designation soldier would be inappropriate'.¹¹⁹ Such distinctions are even drawn in the scholarship, for example by Connor in his chapter 'Warriors and Soldiers'. He traces the historiography on Aboriginal warfare which largely counters the image presented by Hunter, by portraying it as highly stylised and ritualistic, short and unsustainable, and triggered by relatively minor affronts rather than territorial disputes and conquest.¹²⁰

Consequently, the accounts of Hunter, d'Entrecasteaux and Flinders, are very important because they stand in stark relief against the prevailing representations of 'traditional' Aboriginal warfare, which have been unduly influenced by Hobbes. As Keeley observes, it is not surprising that Hobbes' view held sway during the 'heyday of European imperialism and colonization'. He states that 'one of the principal apologies for western imperialism was the pacification of ever-warring savages by European conquest, missionary activity, and administration'.¹²¹ Indeed, the recent 'history wars' in Australia were sparked by Keith Windschuttle's resurrection of this nineteenth-century narrative in his history of the settlement of Tasmania, which unquestioningly follows colonial reports and depicts the Tasmanians as thieving, violent, lawless, and dysfunctional.¹²² Yet, as Keeley notes, it was 'soldiers,

¹¹⁸ Harry Holbert Turney-High, *Primitive War: Its Practice and Concepts*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1949.

¹¹⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. 'warrior'.

¹²⁰ Connor, *Australian Frontier Wars*, 1-21.

¹²¹ Keeley, *War before Civilization*, 7.

¹²² His study explores a later period than that covered in this thesis, but he does touch on the French explorers briefly. He criticises Lyndall Ryan's use of the early anthropology, stating that Labillardière and Péron conducted 'the most "scientific" studies' but that these cannot be trusted because 'neither spoke native languages and both spent only short periods with the Aborigines', which is a fair argument. However, Windschuttle does not take heed of his own advice, for he later slavishly regurgitates Péron's violent and exploitative portrayal of the of the Tasmanian men's treatment of their women, a representation which will be explored in chapter six. Finally, as an aside, Windschuttle is renowned for forensically investigating other historians' footnotes for inaccuracies, yet is not above such sloppy scholarship himself, for in the aforementioned description of Péron he both misspells his first name and claims that he was in Tasmania three years after he had already returned to France. His text has received many critiques including a collection of essays edited by Robert Manne. Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803-1847*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2002, 105 and

missionaries, and colonial functionaries sent out to establish Western dominion [who] brought back accounts that emphasized the Hobbesian features of societies they sought to conquer and transform' so their accounts need to be read critically.¹²³ This is especially the case in their descriptions of Aboriginal contests, trials, and ritual warfare.

vi. warrior contests

Although not widely seen the explorers did on occasion witness Aboriginal warfare, and the First Fleet officers recorded the most detailed accounts, again because of the length of their stay and the sustained relationships they developed with the Eora people. In their eyes the nature of the conflicts witnessed around Port Jackson suggested that the Hobbesian thesis was irrefutable. Tench, claimed that 'too justly, as my observations teach me, had Hobbes defined a state of nature to be a state of war'. In 'Battle', he alleges, 'every species of violence [was] practiced'. Tench states that in their clashes 'They seize their antagonist and snap like enraged dogs, they wield the sword and the club, the bone shatters beneath their fall and they drop the prey of unsparing vengeance'.¹²⁴ However, this was not an eyewitness account, but instead a narrative ostensibly reconstructing the typical course of their battles. While his imagining of Aboriginal warfare explicitly referred to Hobbes, the seventeenth-century philosopher's influence was apparent in most of the First Fleet accounts of warriors contests.

As illustrated in earlier chapters, Collins took a particular interest in indigenous cultural practices documenting the most detailed accounts of their 'affairs of honour'. In December 1793 the British assembled to watch one of the indigenous 'trials', held in order to take vengeance for 'one or more murders having been known'.¹²⁵ Collins realised that the 'custom of the country' demanded that the perpetrator of a murder 'meet the relations of the deceased, who were to avenge their deaths by throwing spears and drawing blood for

379. Robert Manne (ed.), *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2003.

¹²³ Keeley, *War Before Civilization*, 7.

¹²⁴ Tench, 1788, 261-2.

blood'. Despite the seriousness of the matter the British revelled in the occasion, gathering over the course of three evenings to be 'amused with one of their spectacles', although Collins did acknowledge that perhaps it should be seen as a 'tragedy, for it was attended with a great effusion of blood'.¹²⁶

In this particular instance a man named Carradah 'had stabbed another in the night, but not mortally'. For this crime he was 'obliged to stand for two evenings exposed to the spears, not only of the man whom he had wounded, but of several other natives' with only a shield and his wits to defend himself. The British were astounded by the man's 'courage and resolution', for 'after receiving several of their spears on his shield' he had not sustained 'any injury'. But they were also perplexed by the duration and course of the trial. Collins was unsure whether it was because Carradah 'possessed too much defensive skill' to be wounded, or 'whether it was a necessary part of his punishment' but on the next day they 'pin[ned] his left arm (below the elbow) to his side', and then returned to hurling their spears at him. This time Carradah was actually wounded, but still defended himself 'until his adversaries had not a whole spear left, and had retired to collect the fragments and piece them together'. After the necessary repairs had been made the British thought that the trial degenerated into a general 'fray': this time 'men, women, and children mingl[ed] in it, giving and receiving many severe wounds' and it was only nightfall which finally 'put an end to their warfare'.¹²⁷

While the British enjoyed the 'spectacle' they were mystified by the politics of the apparent fracas. Participants whom they knew to be friends fought each other 'with all the ardour of the bitterest enemies' but then when the battle ended, returned to being friends, pronouncing that their 'combatants' who had injured them were 'good and brave'. Collins was also surprised to discover that Carradah 'had not entirely expiated his offence' and was to undergo another

¹²⁵ Collins, *Account*, 275.

¹²⁶ Collins, *Account*, 275.

¹²⁷ Collins, *Account*, 276.

ordeal when ‘some natives’ who had been absent from the ‘ceremonies’ arrived.¹²⁸

Connor recognises similar incidents as ‘ritual trials’ which were part of ‘Aboriginal customary law’, and Clendinnen claims that in this particular episode even Collins recognised what he was ‘watching [as] law at work’, evidenced by his use of the terms “‘trial’”, and “‘expiation’”, and “‘offence’”.¹²⁹ Her argument is somewhat tenuous because these terms are not exclusively juridical, and Collins more explicitly referred to Carradah’s ordeal as a ‘custom’, which in the eighteenth century was considered distinct from laws. For example Montesquieu, in his discussion of the rights and responsibilities of conquerors, held that ‘it is not enough to leave the vanquished nation its laws; it is perhaps more necessary to leave it its mores, because a people always knows, loves, and defends its mores better than its laws’.¹³⁰ Further, in contrast to Clendinnen’s claim, the judge-advocate’s description of the ‘trial’ lacked his usual commentary and evaluation, which I contend was because he did not take it seriously, instead considering it mere theatre. While he did appreciate the warriors’ courage, and observed that they ‘possess[ed] by nature a good habit of body, [and] very soon recovered from their wounds’, he did not necessarily see any ‘order’, as Clendinnen claims, in the Hobbesian ‘fray’ he witnessed.¹³¹ This is even more apparent in Collins’ account of another incident in March 1795 which Clendinnen does not discuss.

In this episode a ‘powerful man, of superior strength’ named Ye-ra-ni-be Go-ru-ey discovered another man, Bing-yi-wan-ne, in the ‘crisis of an amour’ with his companion Maw-ber-ry, so he ‘fell upon him with a club’ and ‘absolutely beat him to death’. The next day, the victim’s friends ‘called Ye-ra-ni-be to an account for the murder’ and organised a similar trial. Collins was more concise in his description of this incident, simply noting that the perpetrator ‘came off with only a spear-wound in his thigh’. He did not consider this episode ‘law at work’ either, as Clendinnen had previously suggested,

¹²⁸ Collins, *Account*, 276.

¹²⁹ Connor, *Australian Frontier Wars*, 3-4, and Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 255-7.

¹³⁰ Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, 146.

¹³¹ Collins, *Account*, 276.

instead contending that ‘the affair [was] conducted with more regard to honour than justice’.¹³² That same month he witnessed another fracas between the men of Port Jackson and those of Botany Bay, involving a stranger named Gôme-boak, who ‘was not more than five feet two or three inches; [and] by far the most muscular, square, and well-formed native [the British] had ever seen’. While Collins appreciated ‘the martial talents of this stranger, the strength and muscle of his arm, and the excellence of his sight’, he did not construe the exchange as anything more than an ‘affair of honour’ for the judge-advocate did not even ponder the cause of the conflict.¹³³

Rather than seeing these conflicts and trials as legal mechanisms, the British perhaps perceived them as Hobbesian hostilities motivated by the desire for glory. As stated earlier, Hobbes contended that ‘glory’ was the third principle ‘quarrel’ which led to warfare, and this supposition was still favoured in the eighteenth century. Historian Sara Macdonald contends that Montesquieu believed ‘the desire for honour’ led to warfare, as did Ferguson, the eighteenth-century proponent of Hobbes.¹³⁴ He thought that wars were fought primarily ‘for honour’ and ‘rivalship’, professing that ‘Mankind not only find in their condition the sources of variance and dissension: they appear to have in their minds the seeds of animosity, and to embrace the occasions of mutual opposition, with alacrity and pleasure’.¹³⁵ Evidently these warrior contests were also motivated by rivalries and competition over women.

Lieutenant-Commander Pierre Bernard Milius ‘witnessed several fights between the savages’ during the Baudin expedition’s stay in Port Jackson, and claimed that ‘the women were generally the cause’. These contests, as opposed to the aforementioned trials, involved two parties who would ‘engage two days in advance to prepare their weapons’, making spears from reeds and embedding them with shell and glass ‘in order to make the wound more fatal’. Then when

¹³² Collins, *Account*, 345.

¹³³ Although he did claim that the Port Jackson Aborigines alleged that ‘Gôme-boak was a cannibal’. Collins, *Account*, 342.

¹³⁴ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 1, 4, 2 and 1.1,3 cited in Sara Macdonald, ‘Problems with Principles: Montesquieu’s Theory of Natural Justice’, *History of Political Thought*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, 2003, 113.

¹³⁵ Ferguson, *Essays*, 3:5, cited in Dawson, ‘Origins of War’, 4.

assembled on the 'battlefield' they would hurl their spears at each other 'with admirable strength and skill'. Despite their dexterity he noted that 'they rarely die from their wounds' and appreciated their stoicism in dealing with their injuries.¹³⁶ This is a rare account of Aboriginal warfare by French explorers in this period, as few expeditions had the opportunity to develop a sufficient rapport with indigenous people in order to observe their contests. Consequently, most of the French accounts of Aboriginal warfare were based largely on conjecture.

While they did not witness any trials or warrior contests in Tasmania Baudin's crew were still sensitive to any clues about the nature of their warfare. Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin noticed a group 'carrying large bundles of [spears]' being led by one man 'carrying a brand with which he set fire to everything as he went along', so speculated that this was 'customary when they want to stave off or begin a war amongst themselves'.¹³⁷ It is difficult to ascertain exactly what Baudin has in mind as he does not elaborate on whether he considers the flames to be used as a strategic or offensive tactic in their battles, or a symbol to indicate that the combat has begun. Most likely he had recalled the aforementioned experiences of Marion-Dufresne who had mistakenly accepted a fire brand, and immediately concluded that doing so was 'a declaration of war'.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ 'Pendant mon séjour à Sydney, je fus témoin de plusieurs combats entre les sauvages; Les femmes y donnent généralement lieu. Les deux partis sont occupés deux jours d'avance, à se préparer des armes. Ils vont, pour cet effet couper une espèce de roseau long de cinq à six pieds, à l'une des extrémités duquel ils adaptent une flèche très-aigüe et d'un bois très-dur. Pour rendre la blessure plus mortelle, la flèche est garnie de morceaux de coquilles ou de verre. Lorsque les combattans sont sur le champ de bataille, ils se lancent leur zagaye avec une force et une adresse admirables. Il meurent rarement des suites de leurs blessures, quoiqu'elles sont souvent de nature à leur laisser peu d'espoir. J'en ai vu qui se laissaient arracher la zagaye sans témoigner la moindre douleur, ils se guérissent avec des herbes qui ne nous sont pas connues'. Pierre Bernard Milius, *Recit du Voyage aux Terres Australes par Pierre Bernard Milius, Second su le Naturaliste dans l'expédition Baudin (1800-1804)*, Jacqueline Bonnemains and Pascale Hauguel, (eds.), Société havraise d'études diverses. Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre, Le Havre, 1987. 48-9.

¹³⁷ Baudin, *Journal*, 307.

¹³⁸ Julien Crozet, *Journal of the Voyage of M. Marion Dufresne, Fireship Captain and Knight of Saint Louis, Commanding the King's flute the Mascarin having under his orders the Chevalier Duclesmeur, Naval Guard, Commanding the Marquis de Castries. Departed from the Isle de France for Otahiti and New Zealand*, Edward Duyker (trans.), in Edward Duyker (ed.), *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman*

However, given the elaborate protocols governing warfare between civilised nations perhaps he wondered how savage peoples would inaugurate their wars. He had been instructed by de Gérando to discover 'Who has the right to declare war? [and] Is this declaration preceded by any negotiation, or at least any formality?', so he may have considered the flames a formal declaration.¹³⁹ Baudin was evidently intrigued by the symbolism of warfare, because later at King George Sound, upon finding two 'monuments', or rather two clearings enclosed by '11 finely-tapered spears painted red at the tip', he posited that it marked the 'graves in which two warriors of different tribes buried there either after a private battle between themselves or after some more general fighting'. He thought that the proximity of the two graves symbolised the warriors 'seeming still to defy one another after death'. Honouring their supposed bravery he forbade his men from 'defil[ing] the graves', and left a tribute of 'two medals and some glass beads on each one'.¹⁴⁰ However, not all of their speculations on the nature of indigenous warfare were so romantic.

In a perplexing digression on the nascent sealing industry in New Holland Péron launched into a tirade on the barbarity of savage warfare through a rhetorical inversion: the elephant seals were ordained with humanity and the Aboriginal hunters presented as bestially inhuman. He lamented the various depredations suffered by these animals and praised the maternal drive which saw them attempt to 'protect their young' from the 'monsters' of the deep. Yet, according to the naturalist 'A far more fearsome enemy await[ed] these animals ashore – man'.¹⁴¹ He claimed that the indigenes closed in on any seal found on the beach, and 'armed with long pieces of wood burning at one end, the savages la[id] siege to the unfortunate castaway'. Then, when 'it has scarcely half-opened its great mouth to expose the only weapons nature has given it, ... they plunge[d] several of these burning torches down its throat, all at once'. After it 'bellow[ed] terribly' and 'shudder[ed] violently' the elephant seal soon died as 'cries of joy [rang] out all around'. Immediately, Péron tells us, the 'ferocious

and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 & 1772, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992, 25.

¹³⁹ De Gérando, *Observation*, 92.

¹⁴⁰ Baudin, *Journal*, 487.

¹⁴¹ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 39-40.

conquerors gather[ed] around their victim; ... tear[ing] at it from all sides at once'. In the following days 'Each one eats, sleeps, wakes again, eats and sleeps once more'. Without any further explanation or elaboration, he suddenly claimed that 'murderous fighting usually ends these disgusting orgies'.¹⁴²

Even though this account was pure hearsay, derived from the stories told to him by English sealers, and only flimsily supported by the tales of other Britons heard during his stay in Port Jackson, Péron did not harbour the least scepticism about the story's veracity, and indeed relished in retelling the gory details of the Aborigines' purported sadism.¹⁴³ He did not demand any evidence to prove the extraordinary account, because in the European imagination savage people had ostensibly coupled gluttony with bloodshed and violence. For example, during the Roman era Tacitus had depicted the Germani in the same manner, claiming that '[w]henever not engaged in war, they spend a little time hunting but much more relaxing, devoting themselves to sleep and food'. Their men apparently loved nothing more than 'To drink away the day and night', and as such 'Brawls [were] frequent, ... and seldom end in mere abuse, but more often in slaughter and bloodshed'.¹⁴⁴ Gustav Jahoda, in his *Images of Savages*, outlines similar accounts of indigenous American and African peoples during the medieval and Renaissance periods, arguing that such depictions exacerbated European perceptions of so-called savage peoples 'animality' and lack of humanity.¹⁴⁵ While some explorers could appreciate the Aboriginal fighters' skills and stoicism showcased in the warrior contests, others could only imagine orgiastic violence. However, as most of these voyages were ostensibly scientific expeditions, their accounts were supposed to be empirically verifiable, not conjectural, so the explorers had to find evidence of the Aborigines' martial attributes, including their weapons and their physical strength and prowess.

¹⁴² Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 40.

¹⁴³ He also states that 'A few years ago, in the neighbourhood of Port Jackson, a double scene of this nature took place among the savages of Cumberland County, when an enormous whale had become stranded there. In the midst of its bones, they butchered one another'. Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 40.

¹⁴⁴ Tacitus, *Germania*, J.B. Rives (trans.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1999, 83 and 86.

¹⁴⁵ Jahoda, *Images of Savages*, 15-36.

vii. testing encounters

Whenever the opportunity arose the Europeans would describe and collect Aboriginal arms, and request demonstrations of their use in order to evaluate their effectiveness. They described a range of 'warlike Instruments'; for example Worgan catalogues the Port Jackson arsenal, stating that it included a variety of spears, and 'a hooked Stick for throwing the Spear, a heavy Club, a piece of hard wood in the form of a Scimitar, and a Shield'.¹⁴⁶ Many of the explorers explained the weapons, noting that most could be used for both combat and hunting or fishing, that they were manufactured in diverse ways from a variety of materials, and possessed differing degrees of effectiveness.¹⁴⁷ Yet, the explorers' tendencies to simply catalogue lists of weapons belied the difficulties they faced in examining and documenting these objects.

The varied nature of their encounters with Aboriginal men meant that the explorers were not always able to win the warriors' trust and inspect their arsenal, so had to resort to novel methods in order obtain the weapons. For instance, after driving off the Aboriginal resistance and finally landing at Botany Bay the *Endeavour* crew undertook a cunning ruse in order to obtain some of the hostile Aborigines' spears. Joseph Banks noted that '3 or 4 more curious perhaps than prudent' midshipman, upon seeing the Aboriginal group who had moved about half a mile away walked towards them, and when close 'pretended to be afraid and ran away from them'. Perhaps not recognising the ostentatious performance as subterfuge four of the warriors 'immediately threw their lances' at the fleeing strangers. Either through accident or design the spears happened to go long, being hurled some '40 yards' beyond their target and landing benignly on the ground. Having accomplished their aim, the actors then stopped running and 'began to collect the lances', which they then took back as booty for the naturalists to examine.¹⁴⁸

Despite only making cursory acquaintances with Aboriginal people Banks amassed a sizeable collection of their arms, and wrote detailed studies on

¹⁴⁶ Worgan, *Journal*, 17.

¹⁴⁷ For example see Banks, *Australian Journey*, 53, & 129-32; Phillip, *Voyage of Governor Phillip*, 26, and Tench, 1788, 56.

¹⁴⁸ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 58.

their effectiveness. He concluded their spears to be 'most cruel weapons' because of the various barbs used, speculating that 'if such a weapon pierced a man it was many to one that it could not be drawn out without leaving several of those unwelcome guests in his flesh' and 'would make the wound ten times more difficult to cure'. He was also surprised by the ingenuity of the woomera's design, claiming that 'with this contrivance, simple as it is and ill fitted for the purpose, they threw the lance 40 or more yards with a swiftness and steadiness truly surprizing'. D'Entrecasteaux's men were also impressed with the effectiveness of the spear, for Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, captain of the *Recherche*, observed a Tasmanian man throw the 'stave' without the aid of a spear-thrower 'forty to fifty paces' with a degree of 'force for a man to have great difficulty in pulling it out' of its target.¹⁴⁹

There was, however, inevitable disagreement on the efficacy of indigenous arms. Hunter dryly noted that he had seen the spears 'frequently thrown, and [thought] that a man upon his guard may with much ease, either parry or avoid them'. Even Phillip in a rare uncharitable moment, mistook their woomeras for swords, and claimed that they were 'made of wood, small in the grip, and apparently less formidable than a good stick'.¹⁵⁰ Their dismissive comments were somewhat disingenuous given the gruesome descriptions of how the various convicts had been dispatched by indigenous weapons. Evidently their criticism was not based on evidence, but instead reflected the Europeans' sense of technological superiority, and also betrayed their class prejudices. David Samwell, surgeon's mate on Cook's third voyage, dismissed the Tasmanians' martial skills: instead of recognising the spear as a weapon he referred to it as a 'short stick ... which we supposed might be a missile weapon', and claimed that it was hurled 'in the same Manner that the Rabble in England throw at Cocks'.¹⁵¹ Apparently the visitors were so underwhelmed and frustrated by the 'awkward Manner in which it was thrown & the little Execution such a weapon could do' that they felt compelled to show the superiority of their

¹⁴⁹ Banks, 1788, 133, and D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's', 282.

¹⁵⁰ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 38, and Phillip, *Voyage of Governor Phillip*, 26.

¹⁵¹ David Samwell, 'Some Account of A Voyage to South Sea's In 1776-1777-1776', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the*

arms. On this occasion Omai was 'impatient to shew them what he could perform' so 'instantly discharged it at the Mark'. The sound stunned the Aboriginal men so that they appeared 'thunderstruck', but upon returning to their senses they quickly fled, leaving Samwell resentful that the Tahitian's foolhardiness had prevented the voyagers 'from having further intercourse with these people'.¹⁵²

It was not just Omai's indigenous impetuosity which drove him to such ill-considered actions, for the British similarly shocked the Aborigines by demonstrating their guns. During one of his explorations Hunter fell in with a party of Aboriginal men and attempted to make friends by giving out presents.¹⁵³ After a short while 'their numbers increased to eighty or ninety men, all armed with a lance and a throwing-stick, and many with the addition of a shield'. He was intrigued by the shields for it was the first time he had seen any, and welcomed the opportunity to examine some of them. He found that the majority had 'been pierced quite through in various places' and through a series of gestures learned that this 'had been done with a spear'. The Aboriginal men insisted that their shields admirably deflected any missiles, and to prove this set 'one up at a small distance, and throwing a spear at it, which did not go through'. Perhaps challenged by the warriors' ostensible satisfaction in demonstrating their shields' impregnability, one of the 'gentlemen' pulled out his pistol and 'standing at the same distance, fired the ball through the thickest part of the shield'. The Aboriginal men appeared astonished as they examined the damage, and to Hunter's mind 'seemed to wonder, that an instrument so small should be capable of wounding so deep'.¹⁵⁴ However, the Europeans were not satisfied with proving that they had superior weapons, they also wanted to investigate whether or not they were physically stronger and more athletic.

Excluding the eyewitness accounts of giants in New Holland the majority of explorers agreed that the Aboriginal men were relatively small and slight. Tench claimed that the Port Jackson Aborigines were more 'diminutive

Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Vol.3, Part II, 992.

¹⁵² Samwell, 'Some Account', 3(II): 992.

¹⁵³ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 39.

and slighter made... than the Europeans, and Milius pronounced that the height of the Tasmanians was not so remarkable.¹⁵⁵ In the pursuit of science they also needed empirical data to support their general observations, and this was not so easy to obtain. Tench was in the position to measure Bennelong while he was held captive, and found that while he 'towered above the majority of his countrymen [he] stood barely five feet eight inches high'.¹⁵⁶ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau did not have to coerce an indigenous subject into submitting to being measured, but instead 'took advantage of their patience and natural gentleness in order to measure the principal dimensions of a man' whom was thought to be aged in his forties.¹⁵⁷ This man's height was measured at '5 feet 3 inches', which was almost the same as Bennelong's height when taking into account the difference between the French and English standards.¹⁵⁸ Unlike the English the Frenchman did not really comment on this size, though his compatriot La Motte du Portail considered them to be 'of middling height'.¹⁵⁹ However, some of the Europeans recognised that their supposedly smaller size had some advantages: Banks thought that while they were 'lean' they were also 'robust' and Tench considered them 'nimble, sprightly and vigorous'.¹⁶⁰

We have seen in previous chapters that d'Entrecasteaux's men and the First Fleet officers found that the Aboriginal men had more stamina and dexterity than themselves when traversing rough trails, but most of the explorers were chagrined to find that they were also much faster sprinters. Cook and Banks had attempted to chase down a group of Aboriginal men at Endeavour River after they had set fire to the ground near the English camp, but after half a

¹⁵⁴ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 39.

¹⁵⁵ Milius states: 'Leur taille n'a rien de bien remarquable. La plus petite est de cinq pieds à cinq pieds deux pouces. La plus grande n'excede pas cinq pieds et demi'. Tench, 1788, 244, and Milius, *Recit du Voyage*, 31.

¹⁵⁶ Illustrating the importance that Tench placed on such empirical data he also detailed the girth measurements of Bennelong's chest, belly, thigh, calf and bicep. Tench, 1788, 244.

¹⁵⁷ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's', 280. Dyer describes the extraordinarily detailed measurements that some of the explorers collected and marvels at the patience of the Aboriginal subjects. For full details see Dyer, *French Explorers*, 50-4.

¹⁵⁸ Colin Dyer states that an old French foot measured 32.48 cm while an English foot was 30.48 cm. Consequently, d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's man was approximately 170.5 cm, and Bennelong 172.5 cm. Dyer, *French Explorers*, 50-1.

¹⁵⁹ La Motte du Portail, 'Journal', 300.

¹⁶⁰ Banks, *Australian Journey*, 92 and Tench, 1788, 51.

mile gave up, calling out to them to return instead.¹⁶¹ In Tasmania, Péron challenged ‘one of [their] best seamen’, an unidentified man who he referred to as Massé, to try and outrun one the men.¹⁶² He proposed an elaborate ruse in which he would try to ‘entice’ some of the Maria Islanders towards them with ‘signs of friendship’ so that their ‘very swift runner’ could then try to race them. Massé was keen to participate, bragging that ‘they will have to be on their toes to escape [him]’. Shortly after establishing their plan they saw ‘twelve to fifteen ... make a dash for the mountains’ so the hyped up sailors ‘utter[ed] loud cries [and] hurled themselves in pursuit of the natives’. Despite the advantage their location afforded them the Frenchmen lost ground ‘within moments’ and Massé ‘came to a halt after the first moment of the pursuit’. Péron smugly needled the runner, asking him ‘What then had become of that nimbleness you brag about all the time?’ The seaman’s explanation was ‘I run like a man and those b___ there run like deer’. Péron attributed the Tasmanians’ ‘superiority of speed’ to their ‘custom of hunting’ which ‘contributes a great deal to the leanness of their legs’, so was happy to admit that, in this regard, the Europeans were inferior.¹⁶³ Discussing the warriors’ physical strength was a different matter, however.

For the most part the expeditions did not have very reliable or sophisticated ways of measuring indigenous men’s muscular force but were still determined to discover how they fared in this regard compared to Europeans because of the prevalence of Rousseau’s thesis that natural man would possess more physical strength. The philosopher posited that man in the state of nature would be stronger and more robust than civilised man because ‘the savage man’s body is the only instrument he knows, he employs it for a variety of

¹⁶¹ Cook, *Voyage*, I: 361-2.

¹⁶² Plomley notes that Massé must be a nickname for there is no one listed with this name listed in the ships’ records. N.J.B. Plomley. *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart, 1983, 95n.

¹⁶³ François Péron. *Voyage de découvertes aux terre Australes, exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l’Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste, et la goëlette le Casuarina, pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804; [historique]...* 2 vols. of text and atlas. De l’Imprimerie Impériale, Paris, 1807-16. N. J. B. Plomley (trans.) in N. J. B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1983, 94-5. However, not all the explorers could do the same. John White, a First Fleet surgeon, described an incident in which ‘a party of convicts’ reported being chased by ‘a superior number of natives’. He believed their claims that they had been pursued for two miles without the Aboriginal men ‘being able to overtake them’, and speculated that ‘if they had succeeded in pursuit, it is probable that they would have put them to death’. White, *Journal*, 151.

purposes that, for lack of practice, [civilised men's] are incapable of serving'. He concluded that 'industry deprives [the latter] of the force and agility that necessity obliges [savage man] to acquire'. Rousseau threw down the gauntlet to the explorer-ethnographers when he declared:

Give a civilised man time to gather all his machines around him, and undoubtedly he will easily overcome a savage man. But if you want to see an even more unequal fight, put them against each other naked and disarmed, and you will soon realise the advantage of constantly having one's forces at one's disposal, of always being ready for any event, and of always carrying one's entire self, as it were, with one.¹⁶⁴

The easiest means of ascertaining whether or not Rousseau was correct was for the explorers to challenge the indigenes to a wrestling match. Finding a time in which a 'good humour' pervaded the Aboriginal and British men alike, the latter decided to try out some 'feats of bodily strength' by seeing who could lift the other into the air. Tench, thought that 'their inferiority was glaring' for one of the Englishmen 'lifted with ease two of them from the ground, in spite of their efforts to prevent him, whereas in return no one of them could move him'. From this display Tench concluded that 'compared with our English labourers their muscular power would be very feeble and inadequate'.¹⁶⁵

This test of strength was, however, far from objective, and failed to prove the inferiority of the Aboriginal men's muscular power. Wrestling is a regimented sport, of which the European men were familiar, and the Aboriginal men not. So according to historian Miranda Hughes, such tests were subjectively biased because wrestling utilised the physical strength of the torso and arms, which was highly valued by the Europeans, whereas other types of physical power such as stamina, agility, and dexterity, strengths which the Aboriginal men were found to excel, were not revealed.¹⁶⁶ However, such tests were not only problematic because of how empirically unreliable they were;

¹⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 20.

¹⁶⁵ Tench, 1788, 144.

¹⁶⁶ Miranda Hughes, 'Philosophical Travellers at the End of the Earth: Baudin, Peron and the Tasmanians', in R.W. Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, 32-34.

they could also be dangerous because of how easily they could inflame tensions, as the Baudin expedition discovered at Bruny Island.

On the 15 January 1802 a small party of explorers had ventured out on a fishing expedition, and shortly after landing encountered a group of Tasmanians. Péron later learned that a burly midshipman by the name of Jean Maurouard decided to test the strength of the infamously physically adept noble savages.¹⁶⁷ Upon meeting the Tasmanians the French presented them with gifts, and to all intents and purposes the ‘natives’ seemed friendly, inducing Maurouard to feel at liberty to try test their physical strength. Selecting the Tasmanian who ‘appeared to be the most robust’, he indicated his desire to engage in a little roughhousing. Planting his feet firmly in the sand, the Frenchman grabbed the Tasmanian’s wrist and gestured that both should ‘pull as hard as possible’.¹⁶⁸ Assuming that his gestures were fully comprehended the midshipman engaged in numerous feats of strength, repeatedly toppling or throwing his opponent into the sand. Mighty Maurouard won out every single time, but as the game was played amid much laughter and frivolity he did not anticipate the Tasmanian reaction. Tiring of wrestling and collecting fish, the Frenchmen decided to withdraw to the ship, so said their goodbyes and presented more gifts. His back turned to the Tasmanians as he pushed the boat out into the water, Maurouard was suddenly and inexplicably struck in the shoulder with a spear.¹⁶⁹ When Péron heard of the attack he immediately assumed that it was a vindictive response to their resounding defeat at the hands of Maurouard, so thought it to be a ‘perfidious and cowardly’ display of brutality.¹⁷⁰ Testing the natives’ strength was a dangerous pursuit because the Europeans could not adequately explain their intentions to their subjects nor anticipate the indigenous reaction. When their method for testing strength was

¹⁶⁷ Péron, *Voyage*, 184.

¹⁶⁸ Baudin, *Journal*, 305.

¹⁶⁹ The point grazed the midshipman’s shoulder blade and lodged in the flesh between his neck and shoulder. The Frenchmen immediately sprung into action. Sub-lieutenant St. Cricq drew his pistol, and with the unstoppable Maurouard charged back up the rise to find the attacker, only to find seven or eight armed men who did not react upon spying the pursuing Frenchmen. The Frenchmen were struck by their peculiarly uninterested demeanour so decided that it was most prudent to return to the ship, and retreated back down the rise without any further incident. Baudin 1974: 305.

¹⁷⁰ Péron, *Voyage*, 185.

as subjective as wrestling, it seemed to hold little scientific advantage to warrant the risks. However, Péron was armed with the means to undertake more ostensibly empirical studies: he possessed a dynamometer.

This instrument was invented by Edmé Régnier in 1796 and two were given to the Baudin expedition in order to test the strength of various indigenous peoples: one measured arm strength by the subject squeezing a spring attached to a gauge, and the other back strength by pulling the spring upwards while anchoring its base between their feet.¹⁷¹ Immediately after the previously mentioned dispute with a Tasmanian over his jacket, after which he concluded that they were by nature treacherous and ferocious, Péron made the foolhardy decision to test his dynamometer on the Maria Island men. Even though the atmosphere had soured considerably, he wanted to continue the experiments on their strength began in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel by the wrestler Maurouard. He also hoped that the novelty of the instrument would 'engage the attention of the savage people' and ease the tensions, so requested that it be brought from the boat.¹⁷²

He found that the men were indeed intrigued by the dynamometer, and 'all wished to touch it at the same time'. While he had their interest he demonstrated its use a few times, and then 'prevailed on them to try their own strength on the instrument', managing to enlist seven of the men. Unfortunately for the naturalist the experiment was not a great success. One of the subjects did not seem to be as strong as Péron had been in his demonstration, and to the naturalist's eye, appeared angered by 'his want of strength'. Seeming to want to redeem himself with a real display of strength the native 'took hold of [Péron's] fist in a passion, and seemed to defy [him] to disengage it'. Perhaps inflaming the man even more, 'after a few efforts' the Frenchman prevailed. Abandoning his objective experiment completely, Péron was determined to prove his own superior muscular power, so after freeing his arm, immediately 'seized [the man] with all [his] strength' and refused to let go, despite his opponent's exertions, and the shame and irritation in the man's face and demeanour.

¹⁷¹ Dyer, *French Explorers*, 54.

¹⁷² Péron, *Voyage*, 222.

Péron's ill-considered bravado cost him his experiment, for the old Tasmanian patriarch, who had been watching the proceedings in 'a profound silence', suddenly spoke, and though he had no 'particular expression of countenance', his words 'produced such an effect'; afterwards 'not one of them would touch the dynamometer'.¹⁷³

The French tests were left incomplete because Péron could not convince the Tasmanian men to use the second dynamometer, so was not able to ascertain their back strength. Although afterwards they did the same tests on indigenous men at Port Jackson and Timor, as well as some English and French men. Reflecting on the experiments, Péron conceded that the dynamometer was not 'perfect, or being capable of proving the precise degree of absolute strength' but still maintained that it could give an indication of comparative strength.¹⁷⁴ Further, his sample sizes were never particularly large, because he also admitted that his 'experiments have been, if not rare, at least difficult and dangerous', as most ended in 'aggression on their part' which he solely attributed to them being 'such a barbarous people'. Despite these obvious empirical failings, Péron was confident in the validity of his findings, concluding that the Tasmanians were the weakest, followed by the Aboriginal men and Timorese; and that the Englishmen were the strongest, followed closely by the French. 'Hence', he claimed, 'we may infer, that physical strength is not diminished by civilisation, nor is it a natural consequence of a savage state'.¹⁷⁵

Most historians agree that the validity of Péron's results are highly doubtful for a number of reasons: it is unlikely that the indigenous men fully understood the procedure of the test; Péron was prevented from completing the experiment because the Tasmanian men refused to participate in the second stage of the test; and the experiment was culturally biased because it only tested muscles that the European men found important.¹⁷⁶ Dyer recognises that the test was 'culturally specific', speculating 'If the French were "stronger" in the hands and loins (they had been hauling ropes on ship for months), would they have

¹⁷³ Péron, *Voyage*, 222.

¹⁷⁴ Péron, *Voyage*, 312.

¹⁷⁵ Péron, *Voyage*, 314.

been so strong in running down and spearing a kangaroo?¹⁷⁷ Yet, more disturbingly, Hughes contends that the experiment only tested the extent to which ‘biased unquestioned assumptions’ had infiltrated his scientific methodology.¹⁷⁸

Yet, Péron’s empiricism was also undermined by his ambition and penchant for self-aggrandizement. Despite not completing his tests, it was with ‘sufficient gratification’ that he claimed to be ‘the first man who has laid open, ... that dangerous opinion so generally promulgated and believed, *that the physical degeneration of man is in proportion to his state of civilization!*’¹⁷⁹ Having been affronted by the Tasmanians’ apparent transformation from peaceful natives to treacherous savages, he hoped to correct Rousseau’s ‘ridiculous sophisms’ and believed that his ‘expedition may in this respect still farther contribute to the progress of true philosophy’.¹⁸⁰ Péron was not alone in his vehement refutation of Rousseau. Tench similarly found that ‘Their muscular force is not great’, and was also bemused by the challenge of the famous philosopher:

Give to civilised man all his machines, and he is superior to the savage but without these, how inferior is he found on opposition, even more so than the savage in the first instance’. These are the words of Rousseau, and like many more of his positions must be received with limitation.¹⁸¹

Revealing why it was important for the Europeans to ascertain the truth of claims about the physical superiority of so-called savage man, Tench posited that ‘Were an unarmed Englishman and an unarmed New Hollander to engage, the latter, I think, would fall’.¹⁸² These tests were not solely intended to answer abstract questions on the comparative strength of different peoples, but were driven by particular concerns about the indigenes’ martial potential and perhaps what kind of resistance they may offer to any future colonists. Such a position

¹⁷⁶ Dyer, *French Explorers*, 54-62; Plomley, *Baudin Expedition*, 145-6; Hughes, ‘Philosophical Travelers’, 32-4; and Duyker, *François Péron*, 122.

¹⁷⁷ Dyer, *French Explorers*, 59.

¹⁷⁸ Hughes, ‘Philosophical Travelers’, 33-4.

¹⁷⁹ Péron, *Voyage*, 314.

¹⁸⁰ Péron, *Voyage*, 312.

¹⁸¹ Tench, 1788, 244.

was betrayed by Péron when he speculated on the untranslated words spoken by the Tasmanian patriarch which put an end to the Frenchman's experiments with his dynamometer: 'without doubt, these strangers only wish to test our strength in order to use the information they acquire against us in the future'.¹⁸³

viii. conclusion

The explorers were prolific in their descriptions of Aboriginal warriors and warfare and their representations were diverse. Their references to the indigenes' martial nature encompassed first encounters, which were construed as aggressive, peaceful, or indifferent, representations of weapons, battles, trials, and contests, to their studies on the Aboriginal men's physical strength, speed, agility, and dexterity. Such representations constituted a vast portion of their depictions of the Aboriginal male body, because most of the explorers' encounters with the men were fleeting, and they were necessarily wary or hostile. However, the Europeans also wrote copious details on the Aboriginal martial body because it reflected contemporary interests.

Eighteenth-century thought was concerned with anthropological questions on the nature and universality of warfare and whether or not it was a natural condition practiced in savage societies, or a consequence of the ills of the civilised state. Two views dominated the period: the Hobbesian tradition which considered perpetual war a feature of primitive society and could only be abated by the introduction of laws, and Rousseau's notion that savage society represented a pacific golden age free from iniquity. These theses coloured the expectations of the explorers who hoped to prove by documenting their observations on Aboriginal warfare and weaponry. However, their indigenous subjects were not so easily moulded into either archetype.

Some, such as d'Entrecasteaux's men, found Tasmanian society to be a peaceful ideal, where the people welcomed them with trust and amity. In contrast, others, for example the First Fleet, found Aboriginal men to be suspicious and hostile, and their martial practices to be lawless, violent

¹⁸² Tench, 1788, 244.

MARTIAL BODIES

spectacles. And unexpectedly, the Baudin expedition were perplexed to find that the same people seemed to exemplify both the Hobbesian and Rousseauian ideals. Yet, the explorers would not have recognised that they themselves represented both sides of this same spectrum. Some honoured their instructions to conciliate indigenous affections, whilst others resorted to violent and intimidatory acts to achieve their aims. Such behaviours inevitably influenced their perceptions of indigenous martial protocols and their empirical studies on the strengths of the indigenous martial body, yet did not preclude some of them from declaring Rousseau to be a vain sophist. The esteemed philosopher's ideals would also come under fire when the explorers examined indigenous labour and ingenuity.

¹⁸³ Péron, *Voyage de découvertes*, 89.

INDOLENT BODIES

i. a stupid and indolent set of people

The explorers witnessed different examples of the Aboriginal men's work, although these were almost exclusively limited to that concerning basic survival, such as obtaining food and seeking shelter. So to this end the explorers described and illustrated various Aboriginal manufactures, such as weapons, tools, and assorted canoes and dwellings, as well as their methods for hunting and fishing. To the European eye these represented the full extent of the Aboriginal men's industriousness and ingenuity, and their evaluations of these were overwhelmingly damning; their wares were seen as rudimentary, and their apparent reliance on the fruits of women's labour considered lazy and oppressive. Appraisals describing the men as a 'stupid and indolent set of people' or 'ignorant and wretched' were not uncommon.¹

These perceptions were not solely determined by the actual labours of the Aboriginal men, reflecting, as could be expected, contemporary ideas about the nature of so-called savage societies' 'arts and industry'. Enlightenment thinkers had pondered the reasons why some societies seemed not to have progressed to the same civilised state as Europeans, and assumed that for the most part it was because, as the Comte de Buffon said of the North Americans,

¹ Arthur Bowes Smyth, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon on Lady Penryth 1787-89*, Paul G. Fidler and R.J. Ryan (eds), Australian Document Library, Sydney, 1979, 57, and Tobias Furneaux, 'Furneaux's Narrative', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume Two: The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure, 1772-1775*, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1961, 735.

‘they were all equally stupid, ignorant, and destitute of arts and industry’.² Although this is a somewhat crude and idle conclusion in itself, eighteenth-century philosophers expended great energy explaining savage man’s apparent indolence and ignorance, elaborating theological, physiological, and environmental causes. Their ideas on labour and land use were inevitably influenced by imperial and commercial interests, as slavery and colonisation shadowed their discussions of indigenous industry.

By the eighteenth century, western attitudes to labour, especially that involved in food production, regarded it not merely as an activity necessary for survival, but also a sign of Christian piety. Late in the previous century, John Locke pronounced that ‘God and his Reason commanded [man] to subdue the earth, ... and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour’.³ This belief remained unchallenged, and at the close of the century was echoed by Thomas Robert Malthus, who held that ‘The supreme Being has ordained, that the earth shall not produce food in great quantities, till much preparatory labour and ingenuity has been exercised upon its surface’.⁴ He did not suggest that obtaining food was the sole aim, but instead proposed that to work was a virtue, claiming that ‘Evil exists in the world, not to create despair, but activity’, so in order to avoid sin, we must ‘exert ourselves’.⁵ Such efforts, according to Malthus, encouraged ingenuity and inaugurated the march towards civilisation, for he speculated that ‘had population and food increased in the same ratio, it is probable that man might never have emerged from the savage state’.⁶ So for him, piety, labour, and ingenuity were integral to progress; ergo, their antitheses, paganism, indolence, and ignorance, stultified man living in the state of nature.

² Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, ‘A Natural History, General and Particular’ [1749], in Earl W. Count (ed.), *This is Race: An Anthology Selected from International Literature on Races of Man*, Henry Schuman, New York, 1950, 4.

³ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* [1690], Peter Laslett (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1963, 321-41.

⁴ Thomas Robert Malthus, *First Essay on Population 1798*, Royal Economic Society and Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London, 1926, 360.

⁵ Malthus states that ‘Evil exists in the world, not to create despair, but activity. We are not patiently to submit to it, but to exert ourselves to avoid it’. Malthus, *First Essay*, 395.

⁶ Malthus, *First Essay*, 364.

Others looked beyond the bible for explanation, drawing instead on ancient ideas concerning the climate, environment and bodily humours. According to historian Roy Porter, 'humoral medicine', originating with Hippocrates in the fifth century BC, 'stressed analogies between the four elements of external nature ... and the four humours ... whose balance determined health'.⁷ These bodily fluids also corresponded to four temperaments, which the Greeks had aligned to different national characters, perceiving themselves as superior to both the phlegmatic northern Europeans and choleric north Africans.⁸ In his eighteenth-century taxonomy of mankind Carolus Linnaeus also attributed humours to particular 'races', but this time ascribed the phlegmatic humour to *Homo afer* instead. Thus, Africans became 'crafty, indolent, [and] negligent', while *Homo Europaeus* was now sanguine - 'gentle, acute, [and] inventive'.⁹

Historian of medicine Mark Harrison argues that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century belief that climate determined constitution was a return to the Hippocratic theories which divided climates into healthy and unhealthy, with those which were hot and wet deemed to be debilitating.¹⁰ This conception of the torrid zones, or tropical climates, as deleterious to one's constitution was also favoured in the eighteenth century, with Montesquieu being perhaps its greatest exponent. He explored the effects of climate on societies in *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), drawing inspiration from humoral theories, physiological studies, and anecdotes about newly discovered lands.¹¹ Such research allowed Montesquieu to claim authoritatively that people from colder climates were more industrious than those from hotter environments. He stated that 'Cold air contracts the extremities of the body's surface fibers', which then 'increases their spring', whereas 'Hot air' does the opposite, so 'decreases their strength

⁷ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1997, 9.

⁸ Porter, *Greatest Benefit*, 57.

⁹ Linnaeus, *The System of Nature* [1735], Vol. 1. Lackington, Allen and Co., London, 1806, repr. in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Cambridge (Mass.), 1997, 13.

¹⁰ Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India 1600-1850*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, 34.

and their spring'. 'Therefore', Montesquieu claimed, 'men are more vigorous in cold climates'.¹² This ostensibly physiological evidence also suggested that the indolent tropical body was inherently lacking in ingenuity and intelligence, for its physical debilitation was believed to enervate the body's 'spirit'. Consequently, in the torrid zones, Montesquieu speculated, there would be 'no curiosity, no noble enterprise, no generous sentiment; inclinations will all be passive there; [and] laziness will be happiness'.¹³

Montesquieu also appeared to endorse the Atlantic slave trade by suggesting that 'servitude will be less intolerable than the strength of spirit necessary to guide one's own conduct'.¹⁴ Immanuel Kant echoed this belief, stating that 'All inhabitants of the hottest zones are exceptionally lethargic', and, perhaps in a nod to slavery, claimed that for some 'this laziness is somewhat mitigated by rule and force'. His environmental thesis also addressed colonisation and conquest. In his praise of the 'inhabitants of the temperate parts of the world', he included that they 'work harder' and are 'more intelligent', and reciting various exemplars, claimed that 'they have all amazed the southern lands with their arts and weapons', which is 'why at all points in time these peoples have educated the others and controlled them'.¹⁵ Not all of Kant's

¹¹ Harrison contends that his ideas borrowed scientific credibility from the latest physiological studies of anatomy, especially John Arbuthnot's *Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies* [1733]. Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 92-94.

¹² Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (trans. and eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, 231.

¹³ Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, 234.

¹⁴ Book 15 of *Spirit of Laws* discusses slavery, which Montesquieu appears to be opposed to, though he has a callously pragmatic take on African enslavement: 'If I had to defend the right we had of making Negroes slaves, here is what I would say: The peoples of Europe, having exterminated those of America, had to make slaves of those of Africa in order to use them to clear so much land. Sugar would be too expensive if the plant producing it were not cultivated by slaves. Those concerned are black from head to toe and they have such flat noses that it is almost impossible to feel sorry for them.' Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, 250.

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, "On countries that are known and unknown to Europeans", in *Physical Geography [Physische Geographie]*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Reimer, Berlin, 1900-60, Vol. 2 and 8, K.M. Faulstich and E.C. Eze (trans.) repr. in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Cambridge (Mass.), 1997, 64. With somewhat less rhetorical flair, a VOC merchant Joan Pieter Purry argued that it was legitimate to 'take possession of a country already inhabited by other people' because 'in the first place all land belongs to the Creator and, secondly, that wild, lazy people just want to be lazy, and that the simpler people are, the less they are inclined to work'. Joan Pieter Purry, *Aanmerkingen. Betreffende de Kust der Kaffers. En het Landt van Pieter Nuyts: ten opzichte van de nuttigheit, die de Oostindische Compagnie, van derzelve voor haaren Koophandel zoude kunnen trekken*, Amsterdam, 1718, 80-100, translated and paraphrased by Louis H. de Vries-Zuiderbaan, 'Dutch

inquiries into indigenous ingenuity were so ostensibly considered, however, for at other times he looked no further than skin colour for explanation, observing of a 'Negro' slave, 'this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid'.¹⁶

Another possible explanation for savage man's indolence and lack of inventiveness was the European belief that he forced his women into lives of toil and hardship. Kant wondered 'In the lands of the black, what better can one expect than what is found prevailing, namely the feminine sex in the deepest slavery?'¹⁷ Malthus similarly claimed that the 'North American Indians', like 'most other savage nations', exploited their women, and moreover, that this enslavement was worse than any produced in western society. He claimed that here women were 'much more completely in a state of slavery to the men, than the poor are to the rich in civilised countries'.¹⁸

Eighteenth-century interest in indigenous industry and ingenuity did not only take labour practices into account, but also attempted to investigate leisure pursuits, though the Europeans mostly found these inexplicably slothful as well. Theologian John Wesley recalled with some bemusement seeing 'a large company of reasonable creatures, called Indians, sitting in a row on the side of a river, looking sometimes at one another, sometimes at the sky, and sometimes at the bubbles on the water. And so they sat for a great part of the year from morning to night'.¹⁹ Distinguishing between labour and leisure in foreign lands was a complicated undertaking as such practices are culturally contingent: recognising how indigenous people enjoyed themselves was especially difficult with many entertainments largely unimagined, so consequently unnoticed. For example, in his list of savage leisure pursuits which the explorers were

Attitudes to Indigenous People', in John Hardy and Alan Frost (eds.) *European Voyaging Towards Australia*. Occasional Paper No. 9, Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra, 1990, 131.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* [1764], J.T. Goldthwait (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1960. repr. in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Cambridge (Mass.), 1997, 57.

¹⁷ Kant, *Observations*, 57.

¹⁸ Malthus, *First Essay*, 41-2.

¹⁹ John Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, 1743. repr. in Keith Thomas (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Work*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, 52.

instructed to try observe, Joseph-Marie de Gérando only devised three: 'songs', 'musical instruments' and 'poetry'. It is interesting to note that he omitted one of the more obvious 'pleasures'.²⁰

Within the European imagining of savage societies, sex was conceived of as little more than 'recreation' for them.²¹ According to historian Carol Blum, Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his treatise on natural man, 'separat[ed] sexual pleasure from its reproductive consequences and sentimental entanglements', such as marriage and child-rearing, and congratulated the 'savage [who] obeys only the physical side'.²² He held that 'Limited merely to the physical aspect of love, ... each man peacefully awaits the impetus of nature, gives himself over to it without choice, and with more pleasure than frenzy; and once the need is satisfied, all desire is snuffed out'.²³ Jean-François Melon also envied the non-European his ostensibly casual attitude to sex. In his discussion of 'oriental' polygamy, he speculated that 'These men we call savages enjoy the Natural Right that renders them the Husbands of all women', while Europeans suffered the 'sad satisfaction of enjoying only one object'.²⁴

However, the assumption that sex was a mere recreation for indigenous people was more often condemned than applauded by Enlightenment explorers, philosophers, and scientists, reflecting the long held western fantasy that most non-Europeans were excessively licentious, promiscuous, and libidinous.²⁵ Lord Kames even speculated that such unrestrained appetites would inevitably dilute the men's seed and deplete their populations, because if 'the carnal appetite

²⁰ Joseph-Marie de Gérando, *The Observation of Savage Peoples*, F.C.T. Moore (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969, 97.

²¹ Jennifer M. Spear, "'They Need Wives': Métissage and the Regulation of Sexuality in French Louisiana, 1699-1730", in Martha Hodes (ed.), *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, New York University Press, New York and London, 1999, 35.

²² Carol Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth-Century France*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2002, 119-20, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* [1755], Donald A. Cress (trans), Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1992, 40.

²³ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 40.

²⁴ Jean-François Melon, *Mahmoud le Gasnévide*, 1730, 91, cited in Blum, *Strength in Numbers*, 88.

²⁵ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, 25; Katherine George, 'The Civilised West Looks at Primitive Africa 1400-1800: A Study in Ethnocentrism', *Isis*, Vol. 49,

[was] always alive, the sexes would wallow in pleasure, and be soon rendered unfit for procreation'.²⁶ So eighteenth-century concerns regarding their own demography demanded that sex required strict regulation within the sanctity of marriage, not only out of religious observance, but increasingly for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the state and increasing its population. Michel Foucault claims that this was the first time that states had affirmed that 'its future and its fortune were tied [to] ... the manner in which each individual made use of his sex'.²⁷ Consequently, sex was not to be seen as a frivolous enjoyment or mere physical release, as supposedly practiced by savages, but instead was appropriated into nation-building endeavours.

The explorers' observations of the Aboriginal men's labour and leisure, including recreational sexual intercourse, were unusually uniform compared to their representations of indigenous martial practices, and belied the complexity of contemporary ideas about industry, intelligence, demography, population, progress, and gender relations. This chapter will examine how these impacted on the explorers' representations of the men's contribution to the procurement of food, their purported economic reliance on women, and the insights into their ingenuity revealed through their manufactures. It will also discuss the explorers' accounts of the Aboriginal men's leisure pursuits, with a particular focus on sexual intercourse, and how this reflected their notions of savage society as unduly indolent.

ii. at the expense of the weaker sex

Over time, the explorers pieced together more of the Aborigines' daily routine through combining their occasional observations with speculations on that which remained unseen. Unaware of the secret and sacred nature of Aboriginal people's engagement with the arcane world, and ignorant about the basis of

1958, 64; and Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, 30-1.

²⁶ Henry Home, Lord Kames. *Sketches of the History of Man*, 4 vols. Edinburgh. 1788, Vol. 2, 22, cited in Pat Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish Enlightenment's History of Desire', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2005, 242.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, Robert Hurley (trans.), London, Penguin Books, 1978, 26.

their laws and customs, the Europeans witnessed a life which they considered utterly bereft. The First Fleet officers thought that they merely eked out an existence; Judge-Advocate David Collins never saw them to 'make provisions for the morrow', and thought that they 'always eat as long as they have anything left to eat, and when satisfied stretch themselves out in the sun to sleep'. He 'observed a great degree of indolence in their dispositions' and suggested that they would continue to slumber 'until hunger or some other cause call[ed] them again into action'.²⁸

Marine Lieutenant Captain Watkin Tench had the same opinion, believing that it was only 'the calls of hunger and the returning light' which roused the Aboriginal man 'from his beloved indolence'. He concluded that 'one day must be very much like another in the life of a savage', admitting that 'in their domestic detail there may be novelty', but asserted that 'variety is unattainable'.²⁹ Lieutenant-Commander Pierre Bernard Milius, second pilot on Baudin's *Naturaliste*, simply stated that the Port Jackson Aborigines' natural tendency was laziness.³⁰ The Aboriginal men's lassitude, the explorers decided, was 'at the expense of the weaker vessel the women' who were seen to fish for hours from their canoes in Port Jackson, or else dive the cold and treacherous Tasmanian waters for shellfish.³¹

²⁸ David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Brian Fletcher (ed.), A.H. & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1975, 499. Ann McGrath traces the history of colonial representations of Aboriginal labour and gender, and claims that 'dominant images of Aboriginal work in traditional society have divided along gender lines. Aboriginal men were commonly depicted as lazy (leisurely/free) and the women as slave-drudges (unfree)'. Ann McGrath, "'Modern Stone-Age Slavery': Images of Aboriginal Labour and Sexuality', *Labour History*, Vol. 69, 1995, 32.

²⁹ Watkin Tench, 1788: *Comprising 'A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay' and 'A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson'*, Tim Flannery (ed.), The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996 [1789 & 1793], 258.

³⁰ 'Leur penchant naturel qui est l'indolence'. Pierre Bernard Milius, *Recit du Voyage aux Terres Australes par Pierre Bernard Milius, Second sur le Naturaliste dans l'expédition Baudin (1800-1804)*, Jacqueline Bonnemains and Pascale Hauguel, (eds.), Société havraise d'études diverses, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre, Le Havre, 1987, 48.

³¹ Collins, *Account*, 499. Joseph Banks stated that the only times they managed to see women was when they were 'employd in some laborious occupation as fetching wood, gathering shellfish &c.'. In Tasmania Péron met with some women finished diving for shellfish and 'pitied them sincerely for having such burdens to carry'. He also noticed that the women who had been lively and charming in the Frenchmen's company immediately became quiet so thought that the women undertook these labours under duress, for Péron claimed that when the women presented the men with their catch the men 'immediately divided it among themselves, without offering any to the women' who sat there 'not dar[ing] to speak, or smile'. Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour*

In both Tasmania and on the mainland the Europeans were struck by the seeming inequity in the distribution of labour. D'Entrecasteaux's sailors 'noticed that the men did nothing, and left everything for the women to do'.³² Moreover, the explorers thought that the women would suffer at the brutal hands of the indolent men if they did not feed them. In Port Jackson Collins alleged that if the women returned from their canoes 'without a sufficient quantity to make a meal for their tyrants, who were asleep at their ease, they would meet but a rude reception on their landing'.³³ It was this seeming injustice which marred the Tasmanian men in the eyes of d'Entrecasteaux's crew. In all other respects the Frenchmen considered the islanders' society to be an ideal exemplar of the state of nature, so they quickly sought to eradicate this blemish, and rectify the women's treatment.

On their third visit with a Tasmanian group at Port du Nord, d'Entrecasteaux's men finally saw how the women prepared their meals. First they stoked a fire for cooking, and then ancillary fires surrounding the first, with which they would dry and warm themselves after returning from the icy waters. The women then dived into the sea, picking 'crayfish, abalones, and other shellfish' with a small stick, and carried them back to shore in a woven bag they had hung around their necks. After returning to the beach they cooked their catch, 'distribut[ing it] to their husbands and children', and then kept 'renew[ing] this exercise until the appetites of the whole family [had] been satisfied'.³⁴

This was the first time that the Frenchmen had witnessed this 'most arduous domestic work', and they were absolutely horrified by it. Gunner Jean-Louis Féron sympathised with the 'extraordinarily thin' women, and considered

Journal of Joseph Banks: The Australian Journey, Paul Brunton (ed.), Harper Collins Publishers in association with the State Library of New South Wales, Pymble, 1998, 129 and François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*, Richard Phillips, London, 1809, repr. by Mark Walsh Publishing, North Melbourne, 1975, 194-6.

³² Joseph Raoul, 'Extracts from the journal of Joseph Raoul. Second pilot on the *Recherche*, 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 306.

³³ Collins, *Account*, 499.

³⁴ Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia and the Pacific, 1791-1793*, Edward Duyker and Maryse Duyker (trans. and eds.), Melbourne University Press, Carleton South, 2001, 144.

that this 'tiring work' was too much for 'so delicate a sex'.³⁵ 'It gave us great pain', botanist Jacques de Labillardière passionately asserted, 'to see these poor women condemned to such severe toil'. He even worried that they might be 'devoured by sharks, or entangled among the weeds that rise from the bottom of the sea'.³⁶

D'Entrecasteaux's naturalists used signs to 'communicate to the men that this pain should be spared' the women, but had great difficulty in comprehending the men's reply, although they assumed that the Tasmanians had understood their interrogation. The Frenchmen at first misconstrued the indigenous men, and believed that they had claimed that diving 'would kill them'. These ostensibly rational men of science would not accept that 'leaving the fishing to the women [was] the result of some superstitious ideas' so continued with their interview, and then deduced from their gestures that the Tasmanian men considered that their 'sole occupation consisted of walking about' or resting.³⁷ Although this was the first time they had witnessed the women's labours, and therefore they could not be sure that it exemplified their domestic routine, the Europeans completely accepted the men's apparent answer because it tallied with their notions of domestic slavery in savage societies.

While acknowledging the Enlightenment premise that 'among all savage peoples the work must devolve upon the women', the chivalrous explorers refused to allow this to continue in Tasmania, so 'often entreated their husbands to take a share of the labour at least, but always in vain'.³⁸ Trying another tactic, the Frenchmen thought a technological innovation might alleviate the women's burdensome toil. Labillardière deduced from his brief observations that 'they had no fish-hooks', so 'gave them some of [theirs], and taught them how to use

³⁵ Jean-Louis Féron, 'Journal of Jean-Louis Féron, gunner', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 287.

³⁶ Jacques de Labillardière, *Voyage in Search of La Pérouse, performed by order of the constituent assembly, during the years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1794*. John Stockdale, Piccadilly, London, 1800, 309-10.

³⁷ D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, 144; Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail, 'Journal of La Motte Du Portail (*Espérance*)', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 301; and Féron, 'Journal', 287.

³⁸ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 309-10.

them'. Unlike their later counterparts, d'Entrecasteaux's men did not realise that the Tasmanians, unlike the mainland Aboriginal people, refused to eat vertebrate fish, so naively 'congratulat[ed them]selves at having supplied them with the means of diminishing one of the most fatiguing employments of the women'.³⁹ Fortunately for their sense of chivalry, they did not stay in Tasmania long enough to realise that this ostensible improvement was also 'in vain'. Despite their naivety the explorers were moved by the seemingly excessive labours of the women, so even began to reconsider their European principles on marriage.

While observing the family groups that day, Labillardière thought that 'two of the stoutest' men 'each had two women by his side', and through the use of gestures inferred that these were their wives. Wondering if 'polygamy [was] established among them' he enquired further, but found that some women 'had only one husband [and] were equally careful to let [the strangers] know it'. Surprised that both types of marriages seemed to prevail in Tasmanian society, he could not immediately decide which of the women he considered to be happier. He believed that, 'as the most laborious of their domestic occupations devolve upon them' those in a polygamous marriage 'had the advantage of a partner in [their labours], which might sufficiently compensate their having only a share in their husband's affection'.⁴⁰

As stated earlier, polygamy was the subject of Enlightenment speculation, and while advocated by some 'reproductive pragmatist[s] and pornographic apolog[ists]' according to historian Carol Blum, it was for the most part condemned as an unchristian, eastern indulgence which could only

³⁹ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 313. Archaeological evidence suggests that Tasmanians did eat fish 4000 years ago, however, there is debate over why they stopped doing so. N.J.B. Plomley outlines the different debates, including Rhys Jones' well-known thesis that it was an 'intellectual decision' to constrict 'their ecological universe', and Plomley's preferred explanation, H. Allen's proposal that climate change led to the need for more calorific foods which eventuated in a food taboo. Rhys Jones, 'Why did the Tasmanians stop eating fish?', in Richard A. Gould (ed.), *Explorations in ethnoarchaeology*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1978, 165-177 and H. Allen, 'Left out in the cold: why the Tasmanians stopped eating fish', *The Artefact*, Vol. 4, 1979, 1-10 cited in N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigine 1802*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart, 1983, 215n.

⁴⁰ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 311.

incite jealousy amongst wives.⁴¹ Further, according to David Hume, polygamy prevented men from being their wives' 'lovers', 'friends' and 'patrons', forcing them instead into the role of 'master and tyrant'.⁴² So Labillardière's ready acceptance that the Tasmanians were polygamous, and that it might even be to the benefit of the women, illustrated the extent to which he believed they were exploited. However, like their conclusions about the fish-hooks, this notion also proved to be a fantasy based on their fleeting contact, because the next day his crewmates continued to interview the Tasmanians about their marriages, and this time inferred that polygamy was 'rejected with abhorrence'.⁴³ Although the Frenchmen were puzzled by their interviews with the Tasmanians, and unable to conclusively determine whether or not they were polygamous, the presence of more than one woman in each of the family groups (whether wives or not) encouraged the belief that the women were slaves to the indolent indigenous men.

Despite the explorers' general consensus that the indigenous men were exceedingly indolent, and their explicit claims that the men did little more than lie around and sleep while their women toiled away as exploited drudges, their accounts are actually peppered with detailed descriptions of the men arduously fishing and hunting. The Europeans had mixed opinions as to the effectiveness of these practices: a small number appreciated the level of skill and patience the indigenous methods demanded, while most were not above laughing at their seemingly rudimentary techniques, equipment, and scant profits. None of the explorers, however, could recognise these activities as work. Historian Alan Frost contends that Lockean thought had rendered European conceptions of labour (in the early stages of society at least), as exclusively defined by that involved in 'domesticating animals or ... maintaining an agriculture'.⁴⁴ Since

⁴¹ Blum, *Strength in Numbers*, 77-112.

⁴² David Hume, 'Of Polygamy and Divorce', in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, containing Essays, Moral, Political and Literary to which are added Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, J. Jones, London, 1822, 168-74.

⁴³ Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's first meeting with the Natives, 1793', in Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier (trans. and ed.), *The General: the Visits of the Expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1993, 279-284: 238, and La Motte du Portail, 'Journal', 302.

⁴⁴ Frost adopts a tone even more damning than the eighteenth-century Europeans in his view that 'The Aborigines had not enclosed the country to depasture herds and locks, nor had they

neither James Cook, not any of the other explorers 'saw one Inch of Cultivated land in the whole Country', they had already decided *a priori* that the indigenous men were indolent.⁴⁵ Consequently, we have to look past the explorers' editorial incursions which claim that the indigenes were lazy, in order to excavate their varied impressions and evaluations of the Aboriginal men in action.

Fishing was the activity that the explorers recorded in the most detail because it was an occupation which they could observe from the safety and comfort of their boats. Along coastal areas on the mainland it was noticed that 'fish [were] their chief support', and that 'Men, women, and children [were] employed in procuring them; but the means used [were] different according to the sex'.⁴⁶ Many of the First Fleet officers focused on the women's fishing tasks because they often did this alone in their canoes, so it was an opportunity for the European men to approach the women in their boats, away from the purportedly jealous eyes of their husbands.⁴⁷ However, there are a few accounts of the men fishing, including an extraordinarily detailed one by Tench, which is not a description of an actual event, but instead forms part of his imaginative narrative depicting a typical day in the life of a savage, an unusual ethnographic exercise for the eighteenth-century explorer.

Tench posited that after the Aboriginal man roused from his slumber, he would usually set off towards the rocks where he could 'peep into unruffled water to look for fish'. Finding some, he would then 'chew a cockle and spit it into the water' as bait for any unwary prey, and then aim his fish-gig to strike

wrought an agriculture upon it. And just as they did not labour in the sweat of the brow for their food, neither did they manufacture to any degree. Their few utensils, weapons, and ornaments were crude in the extreme – more pieces of wood, stone, shell, bark, bone, or hair, fashioned in rudimentary ways to meet only basic needs'. Based on this European lens, he argues, the British had little choice but to view the land as *terra nullius* because the Aborigines had not demonstrated their 'dominion' over the land in a recognisable way. Alan Frost, 'New South Wales as *terra nullius*: The British denial of Aboriginal land rights', in Susan Janson and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Through White Eyes*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, 72.

⁴⁵ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume One: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1955, 396.

⁴⁶ Collins, *Account*, 461.

⁴⁷ Ann McGrath has explored some of these accounts in her analysis of the First Fleet officer's depictions of their own chivalry. Ann McGrath 'The White Man's Looking Glass: Aboriginal-

when the opportunity finally arose. 'Transpierc[ing]' his fish with the spear's barbs he would then drop the weapon, allowing the fish to float to the surface buoyed by the wooden shaft, and then haul it towards him. 'But sometimes', Tench exclaimed, 'the fish [had] either deserted the rocks, ... or [were] too shy', so the fisherman would have to employ other means.

On these occasions the man would launch his canoe, travelling into deeper waters where he could 'dart his gig at them to the distance of many yards', in which 'he [was] often successful' in catching mullets or other smaller fish. Finally, Tench advised his readers that 'these people suffer[ed] severely' when prevented from fishing for various reasons, although this was somewhat difficult to believe because he then outlined a range of other foods they could obtain such as 'shellfish, which may happen to cling to the rocks and be cast on the beach'.⁴⁸ His account gave fine details on the Aboriginal men's different fishing methods, and reflected his appreciation of the degree of skill they possessed. It also illustrated that, contrary to British claims, the men were not completely indolent and also contributed to the family economy.

Surgeon George Worgan's account goes even further, for he stated that after the men finished spearing fish from the rocks, having 'caught enough for a Meal, and [starting to] feel hungry', they would then 'call the Women on shore', and upon their return, the men would 'haul up the Canoes' for them. His account even suggests that the men contributed to the cooking, for after mentioning the men's courteous conduct he stated that '*They* then gather up a few dry Sticks, light a fire ... and broil their Fish'.⁴⁹ Collins described a similar incident in which Bennelong prepared the meal. He observed the man's sister and wife fishing from a 'new canoe which the husband had cut in his last

Colonial Gender Relations at Port Jackson'. *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 99, Oct. 1990, 189-206.

⁴⁸ Despite their suffering from having 'no resources', Tench also listed that they can 'hunt particular reptiles and small animals, which are scarce, to dig fern roots in the swamps or gather a few berries, destitute of flavour and nutrition which the woods afford'. Collins also documented the range of food sources they ate to the Britons' 'wonder and disgust', such as 'large worms and grubs' which a European servant of his 'often joined them in eating' and assured the judge-advocate that 'it was sweeter than any marrow he had ever tasted', and eels which they caught in traps 'at a certain season of the year'. Tench, 1788, 260, and Collins, *Account*, 461-3.

⁴⁹ My italics. George Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon*, Library Council of New South Wales in association with the Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1978, 16-7.

excursion to Parramatta' for her, while Bennelong, who had been looking after his sister's child, met them to haul the canoe ashore. He then sat on a rock and 'prepar[ed] to dress and eat the fish he had just received', while his sister slept and his wife ate 'some rock-oysters'.⁵⁰

Evidently, the reputedly indolent and exploitative Aboriginal men actually helped the women with their labours, but they also, on occasion, assisted the Europeans with theirs. Worgan reported an instance when the 'some of the Natives' came upon a group of Britons fishing with nets, so 'helped them to haul the Seine on shore, for which kind Office they were liberally rewarded with a Portion of Fish'.⁵¹ Yet, the men may not have worked exclusively for payment, as suggested by Baudin's sailors who had a similar experience in Tasmania, in which 'The men and children joyfully helped haul the net ashore, but consistently refused to share the catch' with them.⁵² While such an activity was no doubt a great novelty for the indigenes, this episode does imply that physical exertion was not entirely alien to the Tasmanian men, as attested by other explorers.

These accounts of the men's involvement in fishing sit uncomfortably with the explorers' explicit assertions that the indigenous men were indolent. Yet the former are mostly description, so their implication, that the men contributed to their family economies and did not shy away from work, is only implicit, and so to a degree, eludes the modern reader. For example, Norman Plomley simply claims that 'the women were wholly concerned with food gathering' and that they were 'completely subservient to their men', and Colin Dyer uncritically recites the explorers' accounts of the men's laziness and 'ill-treatment of the women'. He even concludes that such treatment 'gave rise' to the nineteenth-century explorer, Dumont D'Urville's claim that the Aboriginal

⁵⁰ Collins, *Account*, 492-3.

⁵¹ Worgan, *Journal*, 33.

⁵² Nicolas Baudin, *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*, Christine Cornell (trans.), Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974, 347.

women 'can only find pleasant the lives they lead with the Europeans who treat them far better'.⁵³

And finally, in examining the aforementioned Collins' account of Bennelong and his family, Inga Clendinnen admits that it 'is indeed a charming scene', but warns against 'sentimentalis[ing] it', because it counters her thesis that the Aboriginal men possessed a 'contest culture', so were 'very' violent towards the women. While she accepts the explorers' descriptions of Aboriginal violence she is sceptical about this pacific episode, speculating that had 'Baneelon's women returned empty-handed, we have to assume that the scene would have been less pretty'.⁵⁴ Yet, it is not only modern readers who have ignored these implicit accounts of the Aboriginal men's labours and contributions to the family economy. Perhaps the Europeans themselves were also blind to the contradictions between their descriptions and appraisals, because they were so influenced by Enlightenment philosophies on savage indolence. This tendency is most apparent in their speculations on Aboriginal hunting practices.

Due to the brief nature of the majority of these expeditions' sojourns in any one place, very few of the explorers actually witnessed the Aboriginal men hunting during the period.⁵⁵ Perhaps because it was a strictly codified practice, as suggested by Collins' account of the *Yoo-long Erah-ba-diang* ceremony described in chapter three, or that the foreign observers were an impediment to a successful hunt, so the Aboriginal men only went out when the strangers were far away. Consequently, the Europeans had to rely on conjecture to understand how the Aboriginal men hunted the exotic and shy animals found in the Australian countryside. The kangaroo in particular interested the explorers

⁵³ Plomley, *Baudin Expedition*, 206, and Helen Rosenman, *Two Voyages to the South Seas by Jules S.-C. Dumont d'Urville*, 2 vols, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1987. Vol. 1. 45. cited in Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians, 1772-1839*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2005, 153-6.

⁵⁴ Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, 159, and 162-3.

⁵⁵ Dyer describes some of the explorers' first-hand accounts of Aboriginal hunting parties, but these are all for expeditions conducted during later periods when settlements had been further established so closer relations between Aboriginal people and Europeans forged. Dyer, *French Explorers*, 67-71.

because it was the largest animal they discovered, and they had found it to be especially fast and difficult to catch.

All of the explorers at various times noted the Aborigines' use of kangaroo skins in their manufactures, so their possession of these hides would suggest that they must have been successful in hunting. During his interviews with the Tasmanians Labillardière had been shown an animal skin pierced with two holes 'which had been made apparently with the point of a spear'. On seeing one of the men demonstrate throwing this weapon, the botanist deduced that 'they launch it with sufficient force to pierce the animal through and through', so happily accepted that the men were competent huntsmen.⁵⁶ However, notwithstanding the drudgery of the women, these particular Frenchmen held the Tasmanian society in high esteem, so easily accepted that the Tasmanians had a high degree of proficiency in their long established customs and practices. Oddly, such logic was not employed by all of the explorers.

The First Fleet surgeon, Arthur Bowes Smyth, was highly critical of the Aboriginal men, so while acknowledging that 'Sometimes they feast upon the Kangaroo' he claimed that they were 'too stupid & indolent a set of people to be able often to catch them'. This hypothesis could only be rationalised by his assumption that the British were by nature superior marksmen, so when they discovered that the animals were 'so extremely shy that 'tis no easy matter to get near enough even to shoot them', he concluded that the Aboriginal men must fare comparatively worse.⁵⁷ John Wilby, midshipman on the *Adventure*, Cook's companion ship on his second voyage, came to a similarly tenuous conclusion about the Tasmanians' hunting ability.

In February 1773 the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* were separated due to the bad weather experienced in Antarctic waters, so the latter set course for the rendezvous point in New Zealand and on the way landed briefly in Tasmania. During their stay at Adventure Bay the Britons saw signs that the place was inhabited, but failed to encounter a single person. However, this lack

⁵⁶ Labillardière, *Voyage*, 300.

of contact did not prevent them from describing the indigenous people. Just by observing the few material items discovered, Wilby immediately assumed that the Tasmanians 'have nothing to Live on but Shellfish'. Like Bowes Smyth, his conjecture was based on his fellow Britons' limited success in shooting game, because he found that 'the Birds, what few there are, [were] so shy, that [it was] difficult to get a Shot at them'.⁵⁸

The tenuousness of their claims is illuminated by examining an account by Worgan, who had observed the Europeans' same difficulty in shooting game, but came to the opposite conclusion. Not long after arriving in Port Jackson the surgeon listed the various 'Water Fowls' that the British had killed, but noted that only 'one Black Swan has likewise been shot'. Apparently there were 'Many of these', but the shooters had 'sometimes go[ne] out for a whole Day, and not [been] able to get a shot at a single Bird'. Worgan decided that the swans were 'extremely shy, as indeed may be said of all the animals here' and, in contrast to Bowes Smyth and Wilby, surmised that this was because 'they [were] harassed by the Natives'.⁵⁹ These contradictory claims based on similar evidence illustrates the Europeans' limited understanding of the Aboriginal practices, and the extent to which some of the explorers had been swayed by the prevailing Enlightenment beliefs about savage societies. Their faith that such peoples must be completely divorced from the so-called civilised, led some of the explorers to propose preposterous explanations about Aboriginal hunting methods.

Bowes Smyth, who had considered the Port Jackson men to be 'too stupid & indolent' to spear kangaroos, still had to explain how they managed to obtain the hides, so the imaginative surgeon proposed an alternative method. The First Fleet officers had noticed that many of the trees had 'regular steps chop'd at abt. 2 foot asunder in the Bark' and had pondered their purpose. From merely observing the trees, Bowes Smyth deduced that 'they mount these'

⁵⁷ Bowes Smyth, *Journal*, 57-8.

⁵⁸ John Wilby, *Journal*, AB Adventure, PRO Adm 51/4522/14 Entry for Monday 15th March 1773, cited in *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., Volume Two: *The voyage of the Resolution and Adventure, 1772-1775*, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1961, 151 n.

⁵⁹ Worgan, *Journal*, 21.

carrying 'large stones', and then passively 'lie in ambush till some Kangaroos come under to graze'. At this point, he suggested, the hunters would suddenly 'heave the stone upon [the animals] & kill them'.⁶⁰ His wild theory was undermined by later observations that the trees 'were notched' by the 'people of Port Jackson' so they could 'ascend [them] in pursuit of opossums'.⁶¹

It is interesting to note that none of these accounts of the Aboriginal men's activities explicitly describe them as 'hunting'. A rare instance of this word being used is by Joseph Ransonnet, midshipman on Baudin's *Naturaliste*, in King George Sound in 1803. During his brief encounter with a group of 'eight natives' he noticed that 'Several very handsome and very large dogs were with them', so he tried to 'get them to give [him] one, but their will was unshakeable'. 'It seem[ed]' from this failed barter, the midshipman told Péron, 'that they use them especially for hunting kangaroos, which they eat'.⁶² This account is unusual because unlike the Britons previously mentioned, Ransonnet was happy to concede that the Aboriginal men successfully hunted kangaroos, and did not speculate on alternative food sources or methods of procurement. Perhaps this uncommon acknowledgement of the men as hunters was because the King George Sound Aborigines possessed similar accoutrements to those used in European hunting traditions?

According to sociologist Adrian Franklin, at the turn of the eighteenth century, hunting became a specialised and regulated 'sport', which was influenced by aesthetic and competitive concerns rather than the need for food. This is evidenced by the increasing popularity in hunting quarry which was then not eaten, such as foxes instead of deer and hare.⁶³ Further, he states that in the mid-eighteenth century hunting became organised and ritualised, drawing on

⁶⁰ Bowes Smyth, *Journal*, 57-8.

⁶¹ Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, G&W Nicol, Pall Mall. 1814. 46. This method was also illustrated by the British. Port Jackson Painter, *Method of Climbing Trees*, watercolour, 31.6 x 19 cm, Natural History Museum, London. Watling 75.

⁶² François Péron and Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage of the Discovery to the Southern Lands: Book IV, Comprising Chapters XXII to XXXIV*, 2nd Ed., 1824. Christine Cornell (trans.). The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide. 2003. 122.

⁶³ Indeed the most prized parts of the fox were those which were the least edible: the 'brush' (tail), 'mask' (head), and 'pads' (paws). The rest of the carcass was then thrown to the dogs. Thomas Henricks, 'The Democratization of Sport in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 7.

cavalry traditions, instead of being ad hoc and opportunistic as it had originally been, so was primarily indulged in by those who were 'decidedly conservative, patriotic, and militaristic'.⁶⁴ Anand Pandian adds that hunting was codified during this period because it was a useful means of preventing soldiers from 'falling prey to frivolous pursuits or effeminate pleasures'.⁶⁵ So within eighteenth-century European culture hunting was narrowly defined, and a big part of this new 'sport', according to Norbert Elias, was that the hunter was distanced from the actual slaughter, hence, hounds played a crucial role in running down and killing the prey.⁶⁶

So for Ransonnet, the fact that the Aborigines possessed dogs signalled to him that they were actually hunters, even though he did not witness them hunting so could only infer this from the fact that, like the Port Jackson Aborigines and Tasmanians, they wore adornments made of kangaroo skin. Consequently, the other Aborigines were not deigned to be hunters because they lacked the requisite accoutrements, and were seen instead as merely indolent. These largely baseless assertions that the Aboriginal men were lazy and exploitative of their women were determined *a priori* by the contemporary philosophers' disquisitions on the indolent savage, and later historiography illustrates that such perceptions lingered long into the next centuries.⁶⁷ While such appraisals were certainly disagreeable and unfair, it was the explorers'

⁶⁴ Adrian Franklin, 'On Fox-hunting and Angling: Norbert Elias and the 'Sportisation' Process', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1996, 435-9.

⁶⁵ Anand S. Pandian, 'Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2001, 83.

⁶⁶ Norbert Elias, 'An Essay on Sport and Violence', in N. Elias and E. Dunning (eds), *Quest for Excitement*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, 160, cited in Franklin, 'On Fox-hunting', 435.

⁶⁷ The representation of Aboriginal workers as unduly indolent persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, ostensibly justifying governmental policies of enforcing, regulating and monitoring Aboriginal labour. Richard Broome states that descriptions of Aboriginal workers often 'abandoned anecdote and embraced generalizations, [using] words such as "lazy", "indolent", "slothful", "erratic" and "roving" to characterize the Aboriginal worker'. Henry Reynolds outlines a similar history in his analysis of colonial attempts to train Aboriginal workers which were largely unsuccessful because they could easily abandon employment: it was not commensurate with their own ethos, they were often able to subsist off the land, and their sense of communality allowed a few workers to provide for the majority. While both historians critique these representations of Aboriginal indolence, both accept that Aboriginal workers themselves contributed to the image somewhat by their actions, whereas I contend that the Europeans arrived in Australia with the expectation that so-called savage peoples were by nature indolent. Richard Broome, 'Aboriginal Workers on South-Eastern Frontiers', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 103, 1994, 216, and Henry Reynolds, *With the White People*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1990, 87-95.

damning criticisms of the Aboriginal men's ingenuity and intelligence which had more serious implications.

iii. their general powers of mind

The explorers, having established in their minds that the Aboriginal men were indolent, then had to investigate the truth of theories such as Montesquieu's which suggested that the savage's physical sluggishness would enervate their minds. Some immediately assumed that this was the case: Milius posited that the Port Jackson Aborigines were immersed in the most profound ignorance, and William Anderson, surgeon on Cook's third voyage, claimed that 'With respect to personal activity or genius we can say but little of either. [The Tasmanians] do not seem to possess the first in any remarkable degree, and as for the last they have to appearance less than even the half animated inhabitants of Terra del Fuego'.⁶⁸ Yet, others, such as Tench, tried not to be so prejudiced, and instead adopted a more judicial approach. He noted that some of 'their manufactures display ingenuity, when the rude tools with which they work and their celerity of execution are considered'.⁶⁹ Consequently, most explorers decided that the Aboriginal men were either completely ignorant and lacking in any ingenuity, or else conceded that their industry was tolerable when taken into appropriate consideration.

Given the difficulties in communicating without a common language, ascertaining indigenous men's intellectual acuity was no easy task, so the explorers could only do so by examining either the ingenuity of their manufactures or their responses to European technology. De Gérando instructed the Baudin expedition to learn about the savages' industries by describing their methods used in 'the construction of huts, and the making of clothes', and ascertaining if 'they know metals' and the use of fire. He also recommended that 'some efforts [should] be made to make [the savages] set about [their

⁶⁸ 'Ce people est encore plongé dans la plus profonde ignorance'. Milius, *Recit*, 48, and William Anderson, 'A Journal of a Voyage Made in His Majesty's Sloop *Resolution*', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 4 Vols. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Vol.3, Part II, 786-7.

⁶⁹ Tench, 1788, 255.

manufactures] better', in order to gauge how quickly they could learn new techniques and therefore become civilised.⁷⁰ While these specific instructions were only given to one expedition, this method was intuitively used by all of the voyagers, irrespective of whether or not they actually encountered any Aboriginal people.

As stated earlier, the *Adventure* landed in Tasmania in 1773 after being separated from the *Resolution*. Tobias Furneaux, the captain of the ship, is described by the editor of Cook's journals, John Cawte Beaglehole, as possessing an 'incuriosity' which prevented him from being a great explorer, because he readily abandoned the question of Tasmania's insularity.⁷¹ Yet, his 'incuriosity' is more evident in his failure to concertedly endeavour to meet any of the Tasmanians, especially since the British considered that it was 'very remarkable that no European [had] ever seen an Inhabitant of Van Diemen's Land - & it [had been] more than 130 years since it was first discovered.'⁷² Although he did not meet any Tasmanians, Furneaux did not let this fact prevent him from appraising their industry and intelligence.

While the explorers described a range of tools, wares, and crafts made by the Aboriginal people, it was their shelters which captured their attention because they suggested that the indigenes were nomadic, so for the sake of brevity, this is the only indigenous manufacture I will discuss. Further, for the likes of Furneaux and his crew, the dwellings were almost the only thing they witnessed of the Tasmanians, so, the Europeans simply had to make the most of describing them. In examining their huts he discovered that they were made from a tree bough which was 'either broke or split and tied together with grass in a circular form [with] the longest end stuck in the ground, and the smaller part meeting in a point at the top, and covered with Ferns and bark'. He thought

⁷⁰ De Gérando, *Observations*, 96.

⁷¹ J.C. Beaglehole, 'Introduction', in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyage of Discovery*, 4 Vols., *Volume Two: The voyage of the Resolution and Adventure, 1772-1775*, J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1961, xxxv and lxviii-lxix.

⁷² James Burney, *With Captain James Cook in the Antarctic and Pacific: the private journal of James Burney, second lieutenant of the Adventure on Cook's second voyage, 1772-1773*, Beverley Hooper (ed.), National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1975, 39. In actual fact, unbeknownst to the English, the French explorer Marc-Joseph Marion-Dufresne had encountered Tasmanians a year before. Beaglehole, 'Introduction', II: lxix.

that the huts was 'so poorly done that they will hardly keep out a shower of rain', so concluded that 'their houses seem'd to be built but for a few days' only, and that they 'wander about in small parties from place to place in search of Food and are activated by no other motive'. Further, he 'never saw the least signs of either Canoe or boat', so it was 'generally thought they have none', and that they were 'quite ignorant of every sort of Metal'.⁷³ Based on these brief observations of their material culture, Furneaux surmised that the Tasmanians were 'a very Ignorant and wretched set of people'.⁷⁴

The captain was not alone in his disparaging assessments of their dwellings. His crewmate, James Burney, thought 'their Huts ... ill contrived'; when Cook set foot in Tasmania on his third voyage he referred to them as 'mean small hovels not much bigger than an oven'; and even Baudin who was often relatively measured in his evaluations, considered them 'the most miserable things imaginable'.⁷⁵ Similarly, at Port Jackson Collins claimed that their 'habitations [were] as rude as imagination can conceive ... affording shelter to only one miserable tenant', and Bowes Smyth labelled them 'miserable Wigwams'.⁷⁶ And in Eendracht Land on the west coast, Péron found some semi-circular huts 'made of shrubby plants' which he considered 'crude', but 'none the less the most finished examples that [they] had occasion to observe in New Holland'.⁷⁷

The explorers were somewhat surprised by the poverty of the Aborigines' buildings, because, according to Furneaux, they were 'natives of a country producing every necessity of life, and a climate the fairest in the world'.⁷⁸ Evidently, he had expected that such ignorance could only be found in the 'torrid zones', as hypothesised by many Enlightenment philosophers. Lieutenant John Rickman of the *Discovery*, the companion ship on Cook's third voyage,

⁷³ Baudin also noted that the Tasmanians appeared 'to have no knowledge of iron and its usefulness. They did not attach the slightest importance to the nails that [they] wanted to give them and returned them to [the French] as serving no purpose'. but he refrained for judging them on it. Baudin, *Journal*, 350.

⁷⁴ Furneaux, 'Furneaux's Narrative', 735.

⁷⁵ Burney, *With Captain James Cook*, 38; Cook, *Voyage*, 1: 396; and Baudin, *Journal*, 345.

⁷⁶ Collins, *Account*, 460 and Bowes Smyth, *Journal*, 57.

⁷⁷ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 138.

⁷⁸ Furneaux, 'Furneaux's Narrative', 735.

was similarly perplexed by the Tasmanians' ignorance and lack of industry despite their hospitable climate. Noting that 'when Nature pours forth her luxuriant exuberance to cloath this country with every variety', it was very 'strange' to the Europeans that 'the few natives [they] saw were wholly insensible of those blessings'. Instead of taking advantage of their fertile environment, the Tasmanians 'seemed to live like those beasts of the forest in roving parties, without arts of any kind, sleeping in summer like dogs, under the hollow sides of the trees'.⁷⁹ The Britons' allusions to the natives' ostensible animality betrayed their utter contempt that the Aborigines could, in their eyes, waste such a bounteous land. Furneaux and Rickman were so confounded that they did not even speculate on any possible reasons for this, although, fortunately for the modern reader, others did.

In Port Jackson John Hunter noticed that the Aborigines' 'ignorance in building, [was] very amply compensated by the kindness of nature', so understood that they had little need for industry. To prove this he even went so far as to make the extraordinary claim that one of nature's gifts was the 'remarkable softness of the rocks, which encompass the sea coast, as well as those of the interior parts of the country', so they did not have to erect comfortable dwellings.⁸⁰ Perhaps these, and similar ethnographic accounts describing the ostensible absence of arts and industry amongst savage societies in temperate climates, led Malthus to counter the claim that it was only the torrid zones which induced ignorance and apathy. In 1798 he claimed that 'In those countries, where nature is the most redundant in spontaneous produce, the inhabitants will not be found the most remarkable for acuteness of intellect'. Consequently, he grandly claimed, 'Necessity has been with great truth called

⁷⁹ Anonymous, [attributed to Lieutenant John Rickman], *Journal of Captain Cook's last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, on Discovery; Performed in the years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, illustrated with Cuts, a Chart, shewing the Tracts of the Ships employed in this Expedition. Faithfully narrated from the original MS*, E. Newberry, London, 1781, 43-4. James Cook also compared the Aboriginal people to animals claiming that 'They seem to have no fix'd habitation but move from place to place like wild Beasts in search of food'. Cook, *Voyage*, 1: 396.

⁸⁰ John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island with the Discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean since the publication of Phillip's Voyage, compiled from the official Papers; Including the Journals of Governors Phillip and King, and of Lieut. Ball; and the Voyages from the First Sailing of the Sirius in 1787 to the Return of that Ship's Company to England in 1792*, John Stockdale, London, 1793, *Australiana Facsimile Editions* No. 148, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1968, 40-1.

the mother of invention'.⁸¹ Believing that the 'savage would slumber forever under his tree unless he were roused from his torpor by the cravings of hunger, or the pinchings of cold', Malthus claimed that it was necessities such as 'procuring food, and building himself a covering' which forced the savage to 'form and keep in motion his faculties'.⁸²

A similar thesis was embraced by Péron in his attempt to understand why the aforementioned huts of Eendracht Land were, in his esteem, uniquely superior to any others found in New Holland. He acknowledged that so 'much effort and care' in their construction 'would seem at first to indicate a more advanced state of civilisation' of these people, than those in other parts of the country. However, he claimed that such a position would be wrong, for he contended that the huts' superiority was instead 'the consequence of a deeper misery and more pressing need'. Péron elaborated that '[h]owever accustomed the native may be to the inclemencies of the atmosphere and the seasons, he can never be absolutely insensible to them', so to this end he would seek out ways to minimise his discomfort, even if he could not completely eradicate it. The Frenchman pronounced that the 'very efforts that he will make to achieve this end will always be in fairly exact proportion to the discomfort that he experiences'.⁸³

The Shark Bay climate was very erratic, for Péron noticed that a 'fresh, very dry morning [gave] way to a burning day which ends, in turn, in an excessively damp, cold night'. So while he accepted that the Tasmanians lived 'in a colder climate', the 'vicissitudes' of Eendracht Land ensured that it was worse. He believed the native had to 'guard himself' by 'building shelters, disposed in such a way as to furnish salutary shade during the day and an essential refuge from the cold and damp at night'.⁸⁴ Although he does not explicitly say as much, Péron's thesis countered Montesquieu's proposal, because Péron believed that those natives 'so near the tropics' possessed more

⁸¹ Malthus, *First Essay*, 358.

⁸² Malthus, *First Essay*, 357.

⁸³ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 140.

⁸⁴ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 141.

ingenuity than those in the more temperate climes.⁸⁵ Of course his thesis only encompassed indigenous people, and did not compare all people who lived in temperate climates, such as Europeans.

The other method the explorers had for investigating the Aboriginal men's intellect was to gauge how they reacted to the ostensibly superior European manufactures and technology. As we have seen in previous chapters, they pompously displayed their weapons, musical instruments, bottles, clothes, and trifles, anticipating that the Aboriginal people would admire and covet them. Often they were disappointed by the lacklustre indigenous reaction. However, by showing the Aboriginal men their tools they not only looked for acknowledgment of their ostensible superiority, but were keen to ascertain whether or not savage man could understand the tools' purpose, and adopt their use for themselves. The explorers ethnocentrically presumed that if the savages could recognise that the European wares were of course better, and immediately eschew their own technology in their favour, that this would signal that the Aborigines were in fact intelligent.

For example, Anderson, who like Labillardière, also failed to realise that the Tasmanians did not eat vertebrate fish, was surprised that 'They were even ignorant of the use of fish hooks' because they did not seem to 'comprehend the use of some of [the Britons'] which [they] were shown'. Their 'indifference ...[and] general inattention' to this equipment (which would have enabled them to procure food they did not actually eat), was taken by Anderson as 'sufficient proofs of [their intellectual] deficiency'.⁸⁶ In the European mind, this level of unresponsiveness did not bode well for the Tasmanians. On the same voyage Cook decided that this 'kind of indifferency is the true Character of [the Tahitian] Nation', for he was dismayed to realise on his third voyage there that 'Europeans have visited them at time for these ten years past, yet we find

⁸⁵ Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage*, 140.

⁸⁶ Anderson, 'Journal', 787.

neither new arts nor improvements in the old'. With some indignation he exclaimed 'nor have they copied after us in any one thing'.⁸⁷

Yet some of the explorers did find that the Aboriginal men would copy them, and demonstrate their comprehension of the western tools. The very first time Alexandre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, captain of d'Entrecasteaux's *Recherche*, met with a group of Tasmanian men he showed some of them 'the use of the axes, saws, knives, nails, etc.' and he noticed that 'they understood very quickly'.⁸⁸ One man, who appeared to be the 'head of the household', and was greatly esteemed by the Frenchmen as 'a very intelligent man', quickly grasped the utility of the axe, and immediately 'cut down several trees with a dexterity which many Europeans would not equal'.⁸⁹ The Tasmanians seemed 'so very eager in desiring the objects' especially the axe which, in his opinion would be the most beneficial to them, that d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau thought they exhibited 'surprising intelligence'.⁹⁰ While the French assessments of the Tasmanians' intellects were certainly more complementary than those of the British, they were no more ethnographically reliable, and still largely determined by European prejudices. In fact Tench railed against both kinds of viewpoints in his disquisition on the Aboriginal men's 'general powers of mind'.⁹¹

'Ignorance, prejudice, [and] the force of habit', said Tench, 'continually interfere to prevent dispassionate judgement'. To illustrate this he reported hearing 'unreasonable' Britons 'exclaim at the stupidity' of the indigenous people 'for not comprehending' what 'a small share of reflection' would have 'taught' the officers not to expect of the Aborigines. At the same time, Tench also lambasted those who 'extol for proofs of elevated genius what the

⁸⁷ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*. 4 Vols.. *Volume Three: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*. 2 Parts. J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1967, Pt 1, 241, cited in Glyndwr Williams, 'English Attitudes to the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific', in John Hardy and Alan Frost (eds), *European Voyaging Towards Australia*, Occasional Paper No. 9. Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra, 1990, 139.

⁸⁸ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'd'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's', 280.

⁸⁹ Raoul, 'Extracts', 305.

⁹⁰ D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'd'Hesmivy d'Auribeau's', 280.

⁹¹ Tench, 1788, 252-4.

commonest abilities were capable of executing'.⁹² Had he been aware of the views of d'Entrecasteaux's men, he might have included chopping wood as an example of these 'commonest abilities'. He pronounced that the Aboriginal people as a nation 'would certainly rank very low, even in the scale of savages' if one was measuring 'general advancement and acquisitions', and that 'a less enlightened state ... can hardly exist', when considering that they were 'strangers to clothing', felt the 'sharpness of hunger', and were 'ignorant of cultivating the earth'.⁹³ However, Tench argued, gauging Aboriginal reactions to European wares was a somewhat limited approach in understanding the indigenes' intelligence, for, by doing so most Europeans were not able to 'discriminate between ignorance and defect of understanding'.⁹⁴

The fact that the Aboriginal people ran an 'indifferen[t] and unenquiring eye' over the European artworks and manufactures presented to them during tours of the British houses, should not, according to Tench, have been considered 'proofs of [their] stupidity and want of reflection', because such items were 'artifices and contrivances' not familiar to the Aborigines, so of no consequence to them. However, he claimed, when they saw objects which related to their world, such as 'a collection of weapons of war' or 'the skins of animals and birds', the Aborigines 'never failed to exclaim' or to 'confer' with one another, wondering if the 'master of that house' was a 'renowned warrior, or an expert hunter'. Thus Tench believed that such recognition on their part indicated that they did not have a 'defect of understanding', but were instead merely 'ignorant' about these foreign things.⁹⁵ To conclude his lengthy disquisition Tench tackled the thorny question of agriculture.

Evidently, some of the British could begrudgingly accept that savage societies did not cultivate the earth, but expected that upon being introduced to it, the indigenes would immediately recognise agriculture's superior benefits,

⁹² Tench, 1788, 252.

⁹³ Yet, he did admit he had met individuals in Port Jackson who 'possess a considerable portion of that acumen, or sharpness of intellect, which bespeaks genius'. Here he considered Arabanoo, Bennelong and Colby, whom, as we have already seen, Tench often engaged with intellectually, and had been both charmed and challenged by their different characters. Tench, 1788, 253.

⁹⁴ Tench, 1788, 253.

⁹⁵ Tench, 1788, 253-4.

and enthusiastically embrace it. Like Cook, the only explanation some Europeans could devise for indigenous people's failure to adopt subsistence farming, was that they were too indifferent and intellectually deficient to do so. Tench addressed this view when he admitted that, 'it may be asked why the same intelligent spirit which led [the Aborigines] to contemplate and applaud the success of the sportsman and the skill of the surgeon did not equally excite them to meditate on the labours of the builder, and the ploughman'. Tench had already acknowledged the contemporary consensus that all 'savages hate toil and place happiness in inaction ... Hence they resist knowledge and the adoption of manners and customs differing from their own'. So, in response to the question of agriculture he pronounced that 'what we see in its remote cause is always more feebly felt than that which presents to our immediate grasp both its origin and effect'.⁹⁶ Tench rationalised that, like Europeans, the Aborigines were attracted to activities which had immediate benefits, and agricultural harvests, which could not be reaped until the distant future, were hardly an enticing prospect.

Tench's lengthy examination of the Aborigines' 'powers of mind' and the nature of their industries incorporated European assumptions about savage indolence, but not in an exclusively uncritical way. Unlike most of his contemporaries he did not seek to quickly confirm Enlightenment theories on the inherent lassitude and intellectual deficiencies of savage peoples. He believed their daily lives and labours to be simple, but recognised the pragmatism of their indifference to the ostensibly superior European modes of subsistence and technology. While the contradictions in the explorers' editorial incursions and descriptions of the Aboriginal men's indolence, combined with the flimsily substantiated speculations on Aboriginal methods of procuring food and constructing their dwellings, reveal the extent to which the explorers were influenced by the Enlightenment philosophies on savage indolence and ignorance, disquisitions such as Tench's are even more illuminating. His thesis suggests that the explorers could engage with the theories rather than just parrot them, and, on occasion, see the intricacies of indigenous societies and mount complex arguments to explain them. Unfortunately Tench's sophisticated

⁹⁶ Tench, 1788, 253-4.

interpretation of indigenous industry was an isolated example then, and even today remains a remarkably nuanced and considered disquisition. Further, it is a shame that he did not apply these same ‘powers of mind’ to the question of how Aboriginal men entertained themselves and spent their leisure time.

iv. a favourite exercise

As stated earlier, the Baudin expedition was instructed to investigate savage peoples’ ‘pleasures’, but ascertaining how Aboriginal men enjoyed themselves was a difficult task because the explorers could not immediately recognise what activities constituted leisure or play in indigenous societies. Kenneth Cohen contends that such concepts are somewhat culturally determined because they ‘mirror larger cultural values and also function as rituals through which people construct those values’.⁹⁷ Further, it is even more difficult for the historian to recognise this, as the eighteenth-century Europeans did not share our notions. The separation of labour and leisure, since, according to Nancy Struna, such distinctions did not arise until after industrialisation.⁹⁸ So, for the most part the eighteenth-century Aborigines’ modes of recreation and its social significance eludes modern readers. Consequently, the scholars of Australian contact history have not examined these, with the closest study being Clendinnen’s description of the First Fleet officers’ dancing, singing, ‘play[ing] and romp[ing]’ with the Port Jackson Aborigines.⁹⁹ Indeed, we have already seen examples of this kind of play in previous chapters which describe the numerous episodes of explorers and Aboriginal men laughing together while wrestling, miming obscenities, mimicking one another, and learning each others’ words.

Yet, Cohen also contends that there are some universal aspects to leisure, or as he prefers, ‘play’, because it refers to a ‘voluntary, pleasurable activity that operates under a set of rules different from the regulations of everyday life. Play sometimes transcends physical experience but never

⁹⁷ Kenneth Cohen, ‘A Mutually Comprehensible World?: Native Americans, Europeans, and Play in Eighteenth-Century America’, *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2002, 70.

⁹⁸ Nancy Struna, *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1996, 2–8, 16–27, and 200 cited in Cohen, ‘Mutually Comprehensible World’, 89–90n.

⁹⁹ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 6–11.

produces anything necessary for survival'.¹⁰⁰ So using this broad definition, we can see that while the explorers did not explicitly describe the Aboriginal men's leisure pursuits, they did describe activities which did not relate to survival, so could be regarded as recreational, as they were certainly not construed as productive. The Europeans' reactions to these activities were quite mixed, for they were either unmoved, charmed, or perplexed by the ways in which the Aboriginal men occupied their leisure time.

One of the most explicit accounts was Collins' description of the games the young men played. One entailed 'throwing up a ball, and passing it from one another', and another involved the players 'rang[ing] themselves in a row' and then one 'roll[ing] a ball or any other round substance along the front of his companions' as they 'endeavour[ed] to strike it as it passe[d]' with small sticks. All Collins said of this game was that it was 'a favourite exercise with them, and of course they excel[led] at it'.¹⁰¹ While he admitted that they were proficient, he did not comment on whether or not this was a positive thing. His neutral response to this pastime seems surprising given that it is one of the Europeans' only accounts of such games, but suggests that the judge-advocate had little regard for Aboriginal leisure pursuits. He was preoccupied by documenting activities which either assisted their survival or warfare, or represented their arcane rituals. Seemingly frivolous activities did not tally with his conceptions of savage life. This attitude may also have been harboured by Tench, because while he enthusiastically described one of their 'sports', it was not a recreational one, and instead related to one of their essential pursuits - hunting.

During an excursion to Rose Hill the party of First Fleet men and their indigenous guides met a man named Gombeèree who had been paddling along the Hawkesbury River. This middle-aged man, who possessed 'an open cheerful countenance' and a 'nose of uncommon magnitude and dignity', impressed Tench with his generosity and trusting nature. After spending the evening with the party of strangers 'gave a specimen of their manner of climbing trees in quest of animals'. Using a hatchet of his own manufacture, and eschewing the

¹⁰⁰ Cohen, 'Mutually Comprehensible World', 70.

¹⁰¹ Collins, *Account*, 466.

western one offered him, 'he cut a small notch in the tree ... in which he fixed the great toe of his left foot'. He then 'sprung upwards' whilst simultaneously holding on with his arm, and then cut another notch for his right foot, repeating the exercise until he had 'mounted to the height of twenty feet in nearly as short a space as if he had ascended by a ladder'. Observing that the tree's bark was 'quite smooth and slippery' and its girth substantial, the Britons found his endeavour to be 'a matter of astonishment', but thought that for him 'it was sport' because all the while Gombeèree 'kept talking to those below and laughing immoderately'.¹⁰² Despite the fact that this activity was evidently enjoyable, it was not entirely frivolous, so Tench was able to appreciate it because, unlike the ball and stick games described by Collins, it obviously enhanced the savage man's survival skills.

Another pastime of the Aboriginal men concerned playing with their children, an occupation which charmed other explorers just as it had Collins, when he witnessed Bennelong looking after his sister's child. British and French alike described numerous incidents of the indigenous men's interactions with their own and others' children, and all found the men to be gentle and attentive, though Tench in particular seemed to admire this quality. During the same excursion in which they met Gombeèree, the Port Jackson party also met an Aboriginal man named Yèllomundee and his son Dèeimba who also camped with them over night. Tench observed that the 'little boy slept in his father's arms' and was pleased to see that 'whenever the man was inclined to shift his position, he first put over the child, with great care, and then turned round to him'.¹⁰³ The marine was not surprised by this display of devotion because he had witnessed similar behaviour the very first time he met an Aboriginal man.

Shortly after disembarking from the ship for the first time, he was accompanied by a seven year old boy when he met a small party of men. They seemed quite interested in the child, and one 'Indian with great gentleness, laid his hand on the child's hat and afterwards felt his clothes, muttering to himself

¹⁰² Tench, 1788, 192-7.

¹⁰³ Tench, 1788, 197.

all the while'.¹⁰⁴ And finally, Arabanoo was the same: even though he was held captive against his will and kept in shackles, Tench noticed that when the British 'children, stimulated by wanton curiosity, used to flock around him, he never failed to fondle them and, if he were eating at the time, constantly offered them the choicest part of his fare'.¹⁰⁵

The First Fleet officers were even able to reconcile their contradictory perceptions of the Port Jackson men as remarkably belligerent and paternally gentle. Collins recorded that when Cole-be stole into the night to kill Wa-te-wal in revenge for another murder, he 'found an infant lying in his arms' so he 'first removed' the child 'before he drove the fatal spear into the father', and then considerately took the child into the settlement. Despite being the judge-advocate Collins did not seem to consider this murder a crime, for he admitted that 'no one was sorry [Wat-te-wal] had been so revenged'.¹⁰⁶

However, the British only noticed the Aboriginal men's affection for the children and willingness to spend time with them, and did not really attempt to explain it. D'Entrecasteaux on the other hand, who was strongly influenced by the writings of Rousseau, was the most effusively positive about the men's treatment of the children. The great philosopher had expounded on man in the state of nature, and while he held that the true natural man would live in isolation and satisfy his needs as they arose, he did acknowledge that as these people came to 'advance' and began to live communally, this would give rise to 'the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love'.¹⁰⁷ It was the latter that d'Entrecasteaux saw during his aforementioned stay at Port du Nord, where he 'witness[ed] the tokens of tenderness that these simple and kind men display[ed] towards their children'. During the French encounter with the Tasmanian family the indigenous men appeared to caress and play with the children in the 'most engaging way', and whenever any 'trifling quarrels' arose amongst the children they would be 'soothed without violence but a slight

¹⁰⁴ Tench, *1788*, 41.

¹⁰⁵ Bennelong behaved in the same manner during his incarceration too, for Tench stated that 'the tenderness which (like Abaroo) he had always manifested to children he still retained, as appeared by his behaviour to those who were presented to him'. Tench, *1788*, 99 and 149.

¹⁰⁶ Collins, *Account*, 461.

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 48.

punishment, followed by caresses which promptly dried the tears'.¹⁰⁸ D'Entrecasteaux believed that a 'primordial natural affection [was] alive in them in all its purity and intensity', and exclaimed over 'how much ... civilised people' could 'learn from this school of nature!'¹⁰⁹ It was not just the influence of Rousseau which made d'Entrecasteaux appreciate the Tasmanian men's affection for their children, however, for during the latter part of the eighteenth century, the *Ancien Regime* government had actively encouraged a new mode of fatherhood.

Previously, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the family had been organised according to patriarchalist models, which defined a social relationship derived from the Roman *patria potestas*, holding that the *paterfamilias* was the absolute legal authority over all who resided within his household, including his wife, children and any slaves, servants or apprentices.¹¹⁰ According to Gordon Schochet, this system entailed a doctrine of duty which was enshrined in the gospel: the fifth commandment, 'honour thy father and thy mother', was taken by the subject as an 'obligation to obey all who stood in authority over him'.¹¹¹ Patriarchalism guaranteed that the filial inferior could expect to receive benefits in return for their obedience, such as food, lodging, clothing, a minimal Christian education, or a trade; and the subordinate was obliged to accept the patriarch's judgement that these best suited their interests.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, 142. Labillardière was similarly impressed by this example of gentle discipline, stating, 'I shall not pass over in silence, therefore, the correction a father gave one of his children, for having thrown a stone at the back of another younger than himself: it was merely a light slap on the shoulder, which made him shed tears, and prevented his doing so again'. Labillardière, *Voyage*, 302.

¹⁰⁹ D'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, 142.

¹¹⁰ Gordon Schochet is often considered the authority on patriarchalism because of his close analysis of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings* [1680]. Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: The Authoritarian Family and Political Speculation and Attitudes Especially in Seventeenth-Century England*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975.

¹¹¹ Gordon J. Schochet, 'Patriarchalism, Politics, and Mass Attitudes in Stuart England', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 3, 1969, 424.

¹¹² Schochet, 'Patriarchalism, Politics, and Mass Attitudes', 417. Further, as illustrated by Robert Olwell in his analysis of the distribution of clothes and commodities to slaves in South Carolina, the 'acceptance of these gifts tacitly acknowledged [their] subjection'. Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1998, 194.

However, according to Leslie Tuttle, this model of fatherhood changed in the eighteenth century, becoming less defined by authoritarianism and more determined by the role's responsibilities. As such the government began to encourage a 'paternalist' model whereby 'virtuous fathers', or the *pères de familles*, were those who had 'obligation to their children in addition to power over them', so provided for them by using their labour. Further, demographic concerns intermittently gave rise to pronatalist policies, which saw the offering of rewards and tax exemptions to fathers with large families. Thus the *père de famille* had a 'political resonance', for only those fathers who were found needy and virtuous were supported. This refashioning of fatherhood was also encouraged by the new philosophies which 'argued that a man had a natural inclination to feel tenderness toward his children'.¹¹³ Perhaps d'Entrecasteaux had these new changes in mind when he witnessed the Tasmanian fathers spending their leisure time lovingly tending to their children, perceiving that it came naturally to them whilst in 'civilised' France, fathers had to be encouraged and coerced into such behaviour. Those explorers who witnessed the Aboriginal fathers' palpable affection for their children were charmed by it, even though it was not strictly a productive use of their time and labour. However, there were more obvious leisure pursuits which were received with some ambivalence, such as the Aborigines' dances.

Anthropology has informed us that within Aboriginal societies dance is a crucial element in many ceremonies, so has layers of meaning and significance connected to the Dreaming, and therefore history, law, kin, and ownership of land. It can also have an arcane aspect, for some dances were created by the ancestor beings, so to perform is to re-enact, and thereby collapse past and present. According to anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose, dance, with its complex patterns and cycles, brings 'Dreaming power and presence into the time/place and bodies of the performers'. Aboriginal dance can also have an earthier aspect, incorporating jokes and parodies on sex, gender and authority.¹¹⁴ However, as sociologist Randy Martin points out, the meanings of different

¹¹³ Leslie Tuttle, 'Celebrating the *Père de Famille*: Pronatalism and Fatherhood in Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2004, 367-72.

¹¹⁴ Deborah Bird Rose, 'To Dance with Time: A Victoria River Aboriginal Study', *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2000, 291-3.

dance movements is 'indeterminate' for the observer, as 'the association between particular movements and concepts has not been culturally established'.¹¹⁵ Consequently, the explorers would not have been able to elucidate the significances of Aboriginal dance, and instead perceived it merely as a enjoyable pastime for the Aborigines, and a peculiar spectacle for themselves.

As stated previously in regard to other Aboriginal practices, the length of the First Fleet officers' commission meant that they were able to document the most detailed descriptions of the Aboriginal dances, which, apparently, 'they often had ... amongst themselves at night'.¹¹⁶ Hunter was particularly struck by the exoticism and skill of these, so recorded a very lengthy account of 'the first opportunity that had been offered for [the Britons] to see anything of this kind', beginning with a description of how they painted their bodies in preparation, as discussed in chapter one. Even though both men and women danced together, Hunter noticed that the men took the lead. Firstly the dancers were arranged 'in a semicircle, by Ba-na-lang, and Co-al-by, who seemed to have the chief authority and direction', and then begun by 'a few young boys' who were then joined by some men and women. The overwhelming impression the Britons had of the dance was that it was 'truly wild and savage', but Hunter was able to discern 'order and regularity' in some parts.¹¹⁷ The British noticed that every so often 'one man would single himself out for the dance' and mysteriously run around the group, seeming to urge the others on with his incomprehensible shouts and singing before returning to the line.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Randy Martin, 'Agency and History: The Demands of Dance Ethnography', in Susan Leigh Foster (ed.) *Choreographing History*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington and Indianapolis. 1995, 109.

¹¹⁶ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 144.

¹¹⁷ C. Ellis argues that within Aboriginal ceremonial song and dance, complex patterns of rhythm and repetition are 'nested within broader elements', and each of these individual patterns fall with mathematical precision into larger patterns. C. Ellis, 'Time Consciousness of Aboriginal Performers', in J. Kassler and J. Stubington (eds), *Problems and Solutions: Occasional Essays in Musicology*. Hale and Iremonger. Sydney, 1984, 84, cited in Rose, 'Dance with Time', 291-2.

¹¹⁸ Unbeknownst to the European spectators this man may have been a 'virtuoso'. Franca Tamisari has found in her study on Yolgnu dance that the lead dancer has a significant kin relation to the land owners so has special rights and responsibilities for the dance, and by 'emitting dance calls' directs the singers. Franca Tamisari, 'The Meaning of the Steps is in

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While the British could not interpret the significance of the various moves, they did notice that there 'appeared a good deal of variety in their different dances', and Hunter's description suggests that he found the choreography to be frenetic and eclectic and their execution athletic and agile. Their motions utterly bewildered the British audience, so all the captain could do was catalogue their different positions, observing that sometimes:

they paired themselves, and frequently danced back to back; they then changed suddenly and faced each other: sometimes all the performers sat down on the ground with their feet under them, and at a particular word, or order, they all raised themselves up: this motion they performed without any assistance from the hands; now they ran back in different rows, then advanced in the same order; again they would form a circle, with some distinguished person in the centre, and sometimes the whole of the performers would appear with a green bough in their hands, which they held up in a conspicuous manner.¹¹⁹

Within this seemingly chaotic performance, one move in particular did strike a cord with the foreign spectators because of its athleticism. Hunter exclaimed that one of 'the most striking was that of placing their feet very wide apart, and, by an extraordinary exertion of the muscles of the thighs and legs, moving the knees in a trembling and very surprising manner'. He noted that only a few would come to the front of the line and execute this athletic move, so he decided that because it required 'utmost skill and agility' it must have 'constitute[d] the principle beauties of [their] dancing'. This particular move was often used to conclude each individual dance, so Hunter deduced that it was their 'favourite', and he did notice that some men performed this finale on their own more than others, so surmised that they 'had great confidence in their own skill' and were 'vain enough to outshine in their ability the rest of the company'.¹²⁰

Between: Dancing and the Curse of Compliments', *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2000, 278-9.

¹¹⁹ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 144.

¹²⁰ Again, returning to Tamisari's examination of the 'virtuoso' she notes that he 'always dances with energy and passion and his performance often outshines that of the other dancers. The jumping is higher, the movements more dramatic, the interpretation theatrical and emotional. Being a virtuoso is his right and duty, a way in which he displays his legitimate authority over the knowledge of his mother's group and the fulfilment of his rights and responsibilities'. Tamisari, 'Meaning of the Steps', 279.

Even though his judgement sounds facetious, it is most likely that Hunter was being earnest for he did appreciate 'this very difficult part of the performance', no doubt especially after the British had marvelled over this move and even attempted to try it themselves. Betraying the fact that the officers were not mere spectators but genuinely engaged with the dance performance, Hunter admitted that 'none of [the Britons] could imitate' this 'quivering motion of the knees', so deduced that 'it required much practice to arrive at any degree of perfection in this singular motion'.¹²¹ He did not disclose whether the English officers endeavoured to replicate this choreography in front of the experts, or after they had returned to the privacy of the settlement, but the fact that they attempted it suggests that they initially considered the movement to be achievable.

Anthropologist Franca Tamisari's experiences with learning a Yolngu dance may give us some insight into the Britons' perceptions of the dance. She says that she was 'encouraged to observe (nhaama) the dancing movements of older people and later to imitate them (yakarrman)' in the privacy of her house, and though she could not 'properly speak one of the local languages' she would question the elders on the significance of each move. Then, 'given the apparent simplicity of Yolngu stepping and arm movements, [she] quickly felt confident enough to perform in public', but found that her 'mechanical competence ... completely dissolved'.¹²² While Tamisari would have had a stronger grasp of the dances' complexity, her example demonstrates how beguilingly easy Aboriginal choreography appeared, and consequently just how inaccessible it was to outsiders, especially the Britons who saw it merely as a something they did 'amongst themselves at night'.¹²³ Hunter was clearly ambivalent about the Aboriginal dance, seeing it as wild and chaotic, but also ordered and, after trying it himself, impressively skilful. However, this ostensible leisure pursuit (for, as Cohen reminds us, it was an activity which did not aid survival), was considered to lead on to one of the Aborigines' pastimes which the explorers took far more seriously – sex.

¹²¹ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 144.

¹²² Tamisari, 'Meaning of the Steps', 276-7.

¹²³ Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 144.

v. wanton with plenty

Some of the explorers believed that sex was little more than a leisure pursuit for the Aborigines, especially the men. In his long narrative on the day in the life of a savage, Tench recognised that ‘even [the Aboriginal man] has his hours of relaxation, in seasons of success, when fish abounds’, and that it was at these times, when ‘wanton with plenty’ he would ‘meditate an attack upon the chastity of some neighbouring fair one’. Considering sex a brutal sport for the indigenous man, Tench speculated that when the opportunity arose, the cruel paramour would ‘seize [a woman] and drag her away to complete his purpose’.¹²⁴

There are numerous European accounts of different aspects of the Aboriginal sexual practices, and these, even including some by the same individuals, seemed to both confirm and challenge each of the Enlightenment’s diverse theses on the nature of carnal desire in savage societies. This confusion may have been due to the salacious nature of sex as a topic of ethnographic enquiry. Few of the explorers were able to maintain their scientific objectivity, and most discussions were generalised and speculative, since hardly any drew on eye-witness accounts of sexual intercourse. Historian Ann McGrath contends that European descriptions of ‘typical courtship’ had ‘every element of myth, of relying on pre-existing primitivist tropes’ and agrees that most stories were unreliable because their striking similarities suggested that they might have ‘all stemmed from one observed incident’. She notes that this oft-repeated archetypal narrative of savage ‘courtship’ has such ‘vague origins’ this it is difficult to ascertain whether it had emerged from ‘rumour amongst the British or from an Aboriginal tale’.¹²⁵ Further, the eighteenth-century thought on savage sexuality which the explorers’ accounts reflected was incoherent because it combined new pronatal imperatives with old prejudices and salacious interests. A final reason for the explorers’ confusion regarding the Aboriginal men’s savage desires was that the Aboriginal men were so difficult to categorise.

¹²⁴ Tench, 1788, 261.

¹²⁵ McGrath, “‘Modern Stone-Age Slavery’”, 35-6.

As we have seen throughout previous chapters, Aboriginal men were compared to Africans, or 'Negroes', because of their black skin, yet were also considered similar to Americans, or 'Indians', because of their ostensibly 'savage' society and lifestyle, and lived in a similarly temperate environment. Usually these dual comparisons did not pose a problem for the amateur ethnographers, because, in many respects, European thought had aligned both peoples when evaluating their corporeality, manners, and capabilities. However, sexuality was a crucial area in which the Enlightenment philosophers perceived Africans and Americans as completely different, resulting in the competing views of savage sexuality which historian Pat Maloney outlines in great detail.¹²⁶

The carnal drives of the former were seen as dangerous and unrestrained, for 'ardent desire [was] conspicuous among rude nations', and hot climates were believed to 'inflame animal love in both sexes'.¹²⁷ Indeed, according to the *Universal History* (1760), Africans were 'proud, lazy, treacherous, thievish, hot and addicted to all kinds of lusts', so in the European mind it was as unfeasible 'to be born an *African* and not lascivious, as it [was] to be born in *Africa* and not be African'.¹²⁸ Americans on the other hand were ascribed a 'feeble' libido, ostensibly controlled by the provisions of nature, so, like animals, only had sex seasonally. For example, John Millar contended that in the New World, 'sexual appetite ... must be in great measure overlooked in that miserable state of society' which is preoccupied by the endless pursuit of sustenance.¹²⁹ The explorers would have also been further confused by the recent discoveries in the South Pacific, where Louis-Antoine de Bougainville had described a sensual arcadia, where everything 'conspire[d] to call to mind the sweets of love, [and]

¹²⁶ Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish Enlightenment', 237-65.

¹²⁷ William Robertson, *History of America* [1792], Bristol, 1996. Vol. 2, 65. cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish Enlightenment', 249, and Kames, *Sketches*, Vol. 2, 41, 51, and 77, cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish Enlightenment', 249.

¹²⁸ *The Modern Part of the Universal History*, 44 vols. T. Osborne etc. 1760, Vol. 5, 658-9. cited in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, New York and London, 1995, 22.

¹²⁹ John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government, from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain to the Revolution in 1688* [1803], Bristol, 1997, Vol. 4, 218. cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish Enlightenment', 250.

all engage[d] to give themselves up to them'.¹³⁰ Tahiti was initially perceived as a voluptuous world where gastronomic and carnal appetites were equally satisfied, without any of the artificial constraints of 'civilised' society.¹³¹ Consequently, the explorers' depictions of Aboriginal men's sexual encounters were quite varied, and at times contradictory.

As Tench's account suggests, sex could be perceived as a violent pastime, with the men aggressively descending on the poor unwary women whenever the whim took them, albeit when they were not distracted by the search for food. Collins even suggested that this recreation began from a young age, for he claimed that the Aboriginal men, 'from the time when they can run, until prompted by manhood to realize their sports, amuse themselves with stealing the females'. Yet, when he actually witnessed this, it seemed to be 'a game or exercise' for both sexes, for he noted that he had 'often, on hearing the cries of the girls with whom they were playing, ran out of [his] house, thinking some murder was committed', and no doubt to his consternation, had 'found the whole party laughing at [his] mistake'.¹³² Of course it is impossible to know what Collins meant by 'stealing', and the extent to which the children's activity was actually sexual, for as Foucault has asserted, the sexuality of children became a 'public problem' in the eighteenth century, as it was assumed to be 'precocious, active and ever present' resulting in a proliferation of discourses and institutions to monitor and control it.¹³³ However, the fact that Collins even perceived rape and violence in the children's play illustrates the strength of his prejudices about savage sexuality.

¹³⁰ Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World Performed by Order of His Most Christian Majesty*, Johann Reinhold Forster (trans.), London, 1772, 257, cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish Enlightenment', 263.

¹³¹ One of Bougainville's crew, Charles-Félix-Pierre Fesche claimed that when a young Tahitian woman came aboard their ship and undressed, the Frenchmen 'came closer, looked, admired, touched' and appreciated that 'she followed the customs of her country, customs that have been destroyed in France by the corruption of our morals'. Being in Tahiti, for the young Fesche, meant being 'plunged into ecstasy; [for] a strong and sweet warmth befell [the men's] senses'. Charles-Félix-Pierre Fesche, 'Journal', in *Bougainville et ses compagnons autour du monde 1766-1769: Journaux de navigation*, Vol. 2, Etienne Taillemite (ed.), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1977, 80, translated and cited in Christopher B. Balme, 'Sexual Spectacles: Theatricality and the Performance of Sex in Early Encounters in the Pacific', *The Drama Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2000, 71-2.

¹³² Collins, *Account*, 463.

¹³³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 1: 28.

Yet, Baudin's men had a similar impression when they witnessed the Port Jackson men's sexual appetites in action. Péron claimed that during their stay, they frequently witnessed a man simply 'seize the first woman that he [met] and that would not dare to resist' him and then 'satisfy the need that is urgent'. The naturalist's account bears some traces of Rousseau's aforementioned construction of the solitary natural man, for once the physical drive had been satisfied, the aggressor would caddishly repulse the poor woman, having nothing more to do with her.¹³⁴ His compatriot Milius similarly perceived Aboriginal 'courtship' as violent, stating that a 'very polite way they have in New Holland to court a lady is to stun her with blows from a stick'. Milius' tone is somewhat facetious compared to the earnest Péron's, for he joked that 'we never tried similar means; thus we did not obtain any favours'.¹³⁵

This jape suggests that the Frenchmen considered the Aborigines to be promiscuous, because they assumed that they themselves could have easily had their appetites satisfied had they been willing to emulate the barbaric technique. So in this regard, it echoes European philosophies on the licentiousness of savages, confirming the sentiment that sex was merely a leisure activity for the men, indulged outside of the ostensibly preferable bounds of marriage and legitimate procreation. Yet, other explorers' accounts countered the notion that the Aborigines were unduly promiscuous, and discussed sexual intercourse in terms of marriage and fidelity. On the other hand, this is not to say that such explorers considered it any less violent or barbaric.

Collins began his discussion of Aboriginal marriage with the warning that 'the refined ear of gallantry' would be 'wounded at reading an account of the courtship of these people!' He held that 'violence' was a necessary 'prelude to love' because women were first kidnapped by men from a different 'tribe'

¹³⁴ He states 'dans les rues de Port Jackson, on a souvent l'occasion de voir un homme saisir la première femme qu'il rencontre et qui n'oserait pas résister. il satisfait le besoin que le presse et dès lors repoussant violemment cette pauvre femme'. François Péron, 'Conférence adressée à "Messieurs les professeurs", décrivant les aborigènes et leurs moeurs près de Port Jackson', *No 09032, Dossier 9: Expédition aux Terres Australes Notes du Voyage, côtes Est et Sud de la Nouvelle Hollande (auteurs divers)*, No. 09032, transcribed by Jacqueline Bonnemains, Collection Lesueur, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Harve, Feuille A, recto.

¹³⁵ 'Une manière très-polie, à la nouvelle hollandé, de faire sa cour à une dame, c'est de l'assommer à coups de bâton; c'est par la force des coups que les femmes jugent de l'amour qu'on a pour elles'. Milius, *Recit*, 48.

which was 'at enmity' with the victim's. 'In the absence of her protectors', Collins claimed, the 'unfortunate victim of lust and cruelty' would be 'first stupefied with blows, inflicted with clubs or wooden swords'. Bleeding, she would then be 'dragged' through the woods 'by one arm, with a perseverance and violence that one might suppose would displace it from its socket', her attacker paying little regard to the 'stones or broken pieces of trees with may lie in his route'. Upon returning to his own people, 'the lover, or rather the ravisher' would then satisfy his urges in a manner 'too shocking to relate'.¹³⁶

But this was not merely promiscuous sex, as described by the Frenchmen, for upon being 'ravished' the women 'bec[a]me their wives', and moreover, Collins stated that each woman would 'seldom quit [her husband] for another'. Such fidelity was not universal, however, for the judge-advocate also claimed that the men 'did not confine themselves to one woman' for most 'possessed two wives'.¹³⁷ In contrast to d'Entrecasteaux's experience in Tasmania, Collins alleged that he saw many instances of this, though whether or not it was polygamy is somewhat doubtful because he did 'not recollect ever noticing [the husband having] children by both', and had 'heard them say, that the first wife claimed a priority of attachment and exclusive right to the conjugal embrace'.¹³⁸ If there was no children and no sex, perhaps these second wives were the men's sisters, and the families interacted together just as Bennelong's had in the aforementioned episode, Collins being ignorant of everyone's kin relationships? Unlike the French accounts, this description of 'courtship' suggested that sexual intercourse was not a fleeting encounter between a man and a woman and merely recreational for the former, but instead, a significant marriage rite, albeit it a bloody one.

Clendinnen warns that trying 'to penetrate the dynamics of the sexual politics of a different tribe is a risky enterprise for the outsider', yet, as stated earlier, fully accepted that the Port Jackson men were 'very' violent towards the women. Unlike McGrath, she takes the explorers' accounts at face value, and states that '[w]hat the newcomers saw as remarkable – what [she] thinks would

¹³⁶ Collins, *Account*, 463.

¹³⁷ Collins, *Account*, 463.

be remarkable anywhere – were the blows Australian men publicly, casually, dealt their women'.¹³⁹ She gives as an example Tench's retelling of a conversation with Bennelong about his scar which was supposedly a legacy of his brutal attack on a woman. As discussed in chapter four, the veracity of this particular conversation was somewhat dubious because Bennelong was not at the time proficient in English and the grammatical structure of Tench's account was suspicious. Yet, instead of doubting Tench, Clendinnen argues that the reader 'might think Baneelon was choosing to embroider reality', but insists that this was not the case as 'too many other accounts report violent rape as commonplace'.¹⁴⁰

While such allegations constitute the majority of the explorers' descriptions of Aboriginal sexual intercourse, there were, however, some instances described by the First Fleet officers which Clendinnen fails to discuss, in which the courtship was mutually instigated and not at all vicious. However, as with their representations of the Aboriginal men's indolence, examples which countered the explorers' prevailing assertions (in this case that the men were violent aggressors), were only implicit, and lacked the same editorialised comment, so may escape the modern reader. In fact, McGrath explains such a tendency, stating that 'evidence [which] did not fit the shape of the dominant discourse ... was marginalised and soon forgotten'.¹⁴¹ The most compelling examples of this were Tench's descriptions of the Aborigines' gentle art of courtship, which juxtaposed his explicit and better known claims that the men frequently attacked the women during their 'hours of relaxation'.

Like Hunter, he observed the Port Jackson Aborigines' dances and heard their songs. Even though he 'always found their songs disagreeable', he must have seen them performed a few times, for he recorded that the Aboriginal people had 'songs of war, of hunting, of fishing, for the rise and set of the sun, for rain, for thunder and for many other occasions'. Not surprisingly, the one he

¹³⁸ Collins, *Account*, 464.

¹³⁹ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 160.

¹⁴⁰ Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 159.

¹⁴¹ She explores the common trope of the Aboriginal men bullying the women, but points out that there are also accounts of the women bullying the men but that these are ignored. McGrath, "'Modern Stone-Age Slavery'", 35.

chose to describe in detail ‘recite[d] the courtship between the sexes’. Considering it a ‘speaking pantomime’, he said that the song was ‘accompanied with an acting highly expressive’, and he ‘once heard and saw Nanbaree and Abaroo perform it’. After dancing some steps, Abaroo ‘gently sunk on the ground, as if in a fainting fit’ and then her suitor soothingly began to whisper in her ear while he ‘bar[ed] her bosom’ and then ‘breathed on it several times’. After her ‘swoon [had] expired’ she slowly came to her senses and ‘gradually raised herself’ in order to tell her audience ‘what she had seen in her vision’. While Tench could not understand the ‘strange incoherent matter’, he did recognise some of the names of people ‘he knew to be dead’, so assumed that the performance had some arcane elements. Yet, what particularly piqued his interest, was that he inferred that her song was ‘all tending to one point – the sacrifice of her charms to her lover’.¹⁴² Unfortunately the marine left how this might have happened to the imagination of his readers and refrained from describing it.

Tench’s account is a significant departure from Collins’ for a number of reasons, the most obvious being the lack of violence and Abaroo’s willing participation. Secondly, unlike the judge-advocate, he described a real incident that he himself had witnessed so could actually name the protagonists, whereas Collins’ account was a generalised description of what was supposedly a common occurrence between the sexes.¹⁴³ Finally, Collins’ account was presented as a description of indigenous marriage, so an ostensibly serious tract, whereas Tench’s text highlights the playful elements of Aboriginal courtship by referring to it as a ‘speaking pantomime’, which suggests that, to him at least, sex inspired some of their leisure pursuits. This theatre genre was popular in the eighteenth-century where the artists ‘perform’d all by Gesture and the Action of the Hands, Fingers, Legs and Feet, without making use of the Tongue’.¹⁴⁴ John

¹⁴² Tench, 1788, 262.

¹⁴³ McGrath observes similar qualities in her critique of the convict George Barrington’s description of Aboriginal courtship, which is remarkably reminiscent of Collins’ aforementioned account, and states that the ‘author knows what savages are like, and so does the reader, and this merely confirms what they already believe. Other stories of brutal courtship and marriage had repetitive elements and lacked detail regarding time, place and characters’. McGrath, “‘Modern Stone-Age Slavery’”, 35.

¹⁴⁴ *The Loves of Mars and Venus: A Dramatic Entertainment of Dancing, Attempted in Imitation of the Pantomimes of the Ancient Greeks and Romans*. London, 1717, x, cited in John

O'Brien notes that pantomime was successful in the 1720s and 30s because it was an example of a low-culture interest which became popular, because it 'both affirmed and parodied the genres of comedy, tragedy, and opera that were considered to be legitimate theatre'.¹⁴⁵

Tench's allusion suggests that he saw Abaroo and Nanbaree's dramatic performance as entertainment, so he perceived in indigenous sexuality an element of frivolity, and more importantly, desire and love because Abaroo gave herself 'to her lover'. This was not merely an animalistic 'rutting', to borrow Lord Kames' phrasing (for this was how he described intercourse in savage societies), nor the violent assault which Clendinnen suggests was the only way in which the indigenous men dealt with the women.¹⁴⁶ Another of Tench's discussions of courtship also implied that the women had some degree of agency, and confirmed his impression that performance was a crucial part of Aboriginal courtship.

Tench stated that the Port Jackson dances provided an opportunity for the men to woo the women, because during the intervals, the 'first advances [were] made by the men, who str[o]ve to render themselves agreeable to their favourites by presents of fishing-tackle and other articles which they know will prove acceptable'.¹⁴⁷ He also countered Collins by stating that in general, 'a man has but one wife', although attested that 'infidelity on the side of the husband, with the unmarried girls, is very frequent'. We can not assume that Collins and Tench were simply giving different names to the same practice, for Collins suggested that the man did not have the right to the 'conjugal embrace' whereas Tench implied that sex was the foundation of these extramarital relationships. However, in a nod to the judge-advocate's claim regarding violence, Tench did admit that at these dances, 'nothing [was] more common

O'Brien, 'Harlequin Britain: Eighteenth-Century Pantomime and the Cultural Location of Entertainment(s)', *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 1998, 502.

¹⁴⁵ O'Brien, 'Harlequin Britain', 503.

¹⁴⁶ Kames, *Sketches*, 2:12–13, cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish', 256.

¹⁴⁷ Tench, *1788*, 263.

than for the unsuccessful suitor to ravish by force that which he cannot accomplish by entreaty'.¹⁴⁸

So it is evident that the Aboriginal men had a range of techniques, motives, and expectations in courting women even if many of the Europeans asserted that there was only a single brutal method. Consequently, it is important for historians to resist ascribing a single view as the ethnographic truth and exclude contrary descriptions. However, it is also imperative to interrogate the explorers' rationales in depicting the Aboriginal men's carnal encounters. This is equally the case when discussing the Europeans' accounts of the ostensibly shameless nature of the Aborigines' public exhibitions of sexual intercourse.

The aforementioned descriptions of sex suggest that the Aboriginal couples were indulging themselves out in public, for Milius claimed that it was 'in the streets of Port Jackson' that the women were seized and violated. His crewmate, the engineer-geographer Charles-Pierre Boullanger concurred, alleging that it was 'the public roadway, which, scorning all modesty, serve[d] for them as the nuptial bed', and that here the indigenous lovers would not dream of being 'surprised nor disturbed in their frolics'.¹⁴⁹ Archaeologist Rhys Jones uncritically accepts that Boullanger's account is true, and speculates that perhaps the Aboriginal couples did not regard the Europeans as 'real people in front of whom private or tabooed acts should not be carried out', or that this suggests the degree to which their 'normal social behaviour' had already 'broken down'.¹⁵⁰

Both of Jones' conjectures assume that Aboriginal people had the exact same 'shame-instinct', to borrow Kant's phrasing, as Europeans, and both are

¹⁴⁸ Trench, 1788, 264.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in P. Louis Rivière, 'Un périple en Nouvelle Hollande au début du XIX^e siècle', *Académie des Sciences Coloniales*, Séance du 18 décembre 1953, 580, cited in Rhys Jones, 'Images of Natural Man', in J. Bonnemains, E. Forsyth and B. Smith (eds.), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988, 60.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, 'Images of Natural Man', 60.

impossible to prove.¹⁵¹ Rather than mystifying the Aborigines' motives or deeming their mores to be fractured, Jones might have simply looked to their material culture for clues. Their habitations were evidently different to that of the Europeans, thereby suggesting that western conceptions of 'private' and 'public' did not manifest in the same way, and they had different sexual cultures. However, instead of attempting to divine what Boullanger's accounts suggests about Aboriginal sexuality, it is more illuminating to examine what it reveals about the European attitude to sex. His assertion is an unreliable ethnographic account because it is generalised and devoid of any specific details, and moreover, it taps into long held European prejudices on savage sexuality. Consequently, it needs to be read critically in the context of European representations of other indigenous people.

Gustav Jahoda contends that since antiquity European fantasies of the Other have employed bestial imagery in discussing a range of indigenous peoples in Africa and the New World, and one of these was that it was common practice for savage peoples to indulge in 'public sexual intercourse and the sharing of women'.¹⁵² Elizabeth Colwill holds that, in the late eighteenth-century, Bougainville's visit to Africa inspired French claims that 'in African lands "men and women deliver themselves without modesty to the sins of the flesh" copulating in broad daylight "on the first mat they find"'.¹⁵³ Finally, Christopher B. Balme argues that public intercourse was considered by Europeans as transgressive, because 'sexual acts' are deemed to be 'an activity exclusively reserved for the private sphere'.¹⁵⁴ Proof of this was the corporal punishment of a 'Dear Irish boy', a marine on Samuel Wallis's *Dolphin* which visited Tahiti in 1767, for having sex with a girl in public, and, according to the

¹⁵¹ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, Peter Heath and J. Scheewind (ed.) and Peter Heath (trans.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, 22. cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish', 242-3.

¹⁵² Jahoda, *Images of Savages*, 11.

¹⁵³ Milly, *Discours sur la question relative à la liberté des nègres. prononcé en l'assemblée générale du district des Filles-Saint-Thomas*, Paris, Didot jeune, 1790, Vol. 3, 9-10, cited in Elizabeth Colwill, 'Sex, Savagery and Slavery in the Shaping of the French Body Politic', in Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (eds), *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century France*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, 208.

¹⁵⁴ Balme, 'Sexual Spectacles', 72.

ship's master George Robertson, 'not beginning in a more decent manner, in some house or at the back of some bush or tree' for example.¹⁵⁵

Yet, this long history of Europeans representing savages as wantonly engaging in public sex was not just motivated by its ostensible transgression of their sensibilities or the indigene's lack of 'taste and propriety'.¹⁵⁶ Europeans were also titillated by the possibility of witnessing it, so there was a salacious element which might have led to some accounts being exaggerated or manufactured, because, as Jane Elliott argues, the 'exotic in sexual or eating habits has always preoccupied some writers ... because of the writer's knowledge that this will attract readers'.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps, the ostensible ethnographic rationale of these accounts disguised and legitimated their pornographic qualities, just as Lisa O'Connell found in her examination of the eighteenth-century marriage-rites genre. She argues that these texts, aimed at those who were 'curious to know how this ticklish Ceremony [was] perform'd in other Countries', were primarily titillating satires, because the marriage rites describes were simply 'metonymies' for the sex acts implied.¹⁵⁸ Yet, the explorers' explication of Aboriginal sexual intercourse was not just limited to the written word; the quasi-pornographic quality of these representations is most explicitly suggested in the drawings of Baudin's artists, Nicolas-Martin Petit and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur.

During their stay in Port Jackson both men drew scenes of Aboriginal couples copulating, and they were evidently intended to be finished as engraved plates and published in Péron's *Atlas*.¹⁵⁹ Péron believed these images depicted

¹⁵⁵ George Robertson, *The Discovery of Tahiti: A Journal of the Second Voyage of the H.M.S. 'Dolphin' round the World 1766-1768*, Hugh Carrington (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1948, 180, cited in Balme, 'Sexual Spectacles', 72.

¹⁵⁶ Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish', 262.

¹⁵⁷ Jane Elliott, 'The Choosers or the Dispossessed? Aspects of the Work of Some French Eighteenth-Century Pacific Explorers', *Oceania*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 1997, 239.

¹⁵⁸ Brown, *Matrimonial Ceremonies Displayed: Wherein are exhibited the various customs, odd pranks, whimsical tricks and surprising practices of near one hundred different kingdoms and peoples in the world, now used in the celebration and consummation of matrimony, collected from the papers of a Rambling Bachelor*. London, 1886, cited in Lisa O'Connell, "'Matrimonial Ceremonies Displayed': Popular Ethnography and Enlightened Imperialism", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2002, 108 and 105.

¹⁵⁹ Péron wrote on Petit's drawing that it must be finished and, with Lesueur's, sent to the engraver Milbert. Nicolas-Martin Petit, "Scene showing Aborigines copulating", pencil and ink,

the natives' 'nearly animal mating', stating that 'they have two quite unusual positions, one of which, especially, may be difficult for us: it appears that it must be one of the most voluptuous and its originality is truly provocative'.¹⁶⁰ Petit's showed a couple in a sitting position facing one another, and in contrast to many of the aforementioned accounts, embracing one another with gentle smiles on their faces. Lesueur's drawing, probably the 'voluptuous' one Péron referred to, represented the woman on her back, and the man squatting down between her legs with his genitals clearly on display behind his right calf.¹⁶¹ Yet, it is not just the explicit nature which renders the latter pornographic; instead it is the fact that both individuals are looking towards the viewer and not at each other. Their confronting return of the gaze suggests that they are performing for an audience, so lack modesty and propriety, and this even seems to invite the viewer to share in their experience.

Yet, this voyeuristic aspect in Lesueur's image was evidently not accidental, for a close examination of the drawing, and its earlier draft, reveals some crucial changes. On this version the original position of the man's leg had been erased and redrawn in order to reveal his genitals instead of hiding them as first depicted.¹⁶² And the initial draft portrays the couples looking at one another, which 'not only minimizes the pornographic quality of the drawing, but also its exotic, almost animal, quality, as it seems more likely that an intimate couple would be interested in one another than a third party'.¹⁶³ This illustration proves that the explorers' were not beyond exaggerating the Aboriginal couples' licentiousness, and calls into question the other accounts of their public displays

18 x 16 cm, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 16055. repr. in Jacqueline Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 98.

¹⁶⁰ 'Par rapport à cet accouplement presque animal, je dois vous observer qu'ils ont deux positions tout à fait singulières dont l'une surtout, peut-être difficile pour nous, paraît devoir être l'une des plus voluptueuses et dont l'originalité véritablement est piquante'. Péron. 'Conférence adressée', Feuille A, recto.

¹⁶¹ Nicolas-Martin Petit. "Scene showing Aborigines copulating", pencil and ink. 18 x 16 cm. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 16055 and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, "Scene showing Aborigines copulating", wash and pencil, 17.5 x 20 cm. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 16056.1. repr. in Bonnemains et al., *Baudin in Australian Waters*, 99. For a detailed description and analysis of these images and an earlier draft of Lesueur's, see Shino Konishi, 'Depicting Sexuality: A case Study of the Baudin Expedition's Aboriginal Ethnography', *Australian Journal of French Studies*. Vol. XLI, No. 2, 2004, 108-12.

¹⁶² Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, "Scene showing Aborigines copulating", wash and pencil, 17.5 x 20 cm, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre, N° 16056.2.

¹⁶³ Konishi, 'Depicting Sexuality', 112.

of sexual intercourse. Unfortunately, it is almost completely unknown because the paper's fragile nature means that it has never been reproduced and published.¹⁶⁴

Despite the explorers' numerous accounts suggesting that the Aboriginal men were violently libidinous or wantonly licentious and devoid of any propriety, they had noticed that the indigenous population was quite low, believing it to be far more thinly distributed than what it actually was. Yet they did not ponder why there were so few babies if there was so much sex, perhaps because Enlightenment philosophy had warned that infertility was a consequence of uncontrolled promiscuity. As stated earlier Lord Kames pronounced that 'As the carnal appetite is always alive, the sexes would wallow in pleasure, and be soon rendered unfit for procreation, were it not for the restraint of chastity'.¹⁶⁵ However, in Tasmania some of the explorers posited that the low population was not a consequence of promiscuity and a depletion of the man's seed, but instead from the men's lack of desire.

As discussed in chapter one, the explorers' clothing hid their gender, inciting the indigenous people to wonder whether they were men or women. On one of these occasions when the Tasmanians were particularly insistent in trying to discover their sex, Péron beseeched one of his slighter and more feminine young sailors to conclusively prove that they were all in fact men. So Citizen Michel downed his pants and 'suddenly exhibited such striking proof of his virility that they all uttered loud cries of surprise mingled with loud roars of laughter'. Péron thought that this 'condition of strength and vigour in the one among us who seemed the least likely, surprised them extremely', so concluded that this 'was not very common' amongst them.¹⁶⁶ In fact, several of the

¹⁶⁴ This drawing has been done in pencil and ink on brown tracing paper, so the contrast between the paper and pencil is indiscernible in photographic reproductions. I had the good fortune to examine this illustration when I visited the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – Le Havre in November 2001.

¹⁶⁵ Lord Kames, *Sketches*, 2:22, cited in Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish', 242. Maloney argued that for many of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, the 'greatest social happiness was to be obtained in a society' which restrained passion so as not to exhaust it through 'early sensuality', and thus nourished desire by marrying later and abstaining from extra-marital sex. Maloney, 'Savages in the Scottish', 245.

¹⁶⁶ François Péron, *Voyage de découverte aux terre Australes, exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste, et la goëlette le Casuarina*,

Tasmanian men seemed to show ‘a sort of scorn’ towards ‘their soft and flaccid organs’, for they ‘shook them briefly with an expression of regret and desire’. Basking in the reflected glory of Citizen Michel’s impressive display, Péron extrapolated from this single incident which only involved the sailor and a handful of indigenous men, and assumed that the Tasmanian men in general ‘did not experience it as often as [the Frenchmen] did’.¹⁶⁷ The indigenes’ fleeting gesture and momentary change of expression led the naturalist to pose the extraordinary question of whether like ‘most animals [did] they only experience the need for love at fixed and intermittent periods?’¹⁶⁸

As stated earlier there was also a school of thought on savage sexuality, influenced by travellers’ accounts of indigenous Americans, which suggested that they were passionless, and lacked a libido due to the hardships of their lifestyle. Employing a similar reference to animals, William Godwin posited that ‘the pleasures of a savage, or, which is much the same thing, of a brute, are feeble indeed compared with those of a man of civilisation and refinement’.¹⁶⁹ Further, John Millar would have answered Péron’s question in the affirmative, claiming that just ‘as beasts of prey, owing to the difficulty of procuring food, “are restricted in the intercourse of the sexes to particular seasons,” so too among human hunters and fishers “the propensities of nature are usually so feeble as to be consistent with similar restrictions”’.¹⁷⁰

Perhaps drawing on these arguments, Péron elaborated his own thesis on sexual desire, concluding that only civilised man could ‘rekindle his passions unceasingly at all periods of the year and on almost all the occasions of life’ because of the quality of his lifestyle. Believing that this on-call virility was a result of a finely calibrated balance of environmental, nutritional, and societal factors, Péron mused:

pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804; N.J.B. Plomley (trans.), in N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*. Hobart, Blubberhead Press, 1983, 84.

¹⁶⁷ Péron, *Voyage de découverte*, 84.

¹⁶⁸ Péron, *Voyage de découverte*, 84.

¹⁶⁹ William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* [1798], in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, Mark Philp (ed.), London, 1993. Vol. 4, 37 cited in Maloney, ‘Savages in the Scottish’, 249.

if we take everything into consideration and remember that the temperature at which we live is always quite high, if we take into account the abundance of our food and its quality, the tranquillisers and strong liquors we make use of, the idleness that we so often experience, and if we take into account the influence of the heart, which is so strong, and of our education, our reading, our finery, our ornaments, our training, our social gatherings, etc., etc., we can soon understand that everything in civilized man predisposes him to give birth to desire.¹⁷¹

As a learned man Péron might have taken some personal satisfaction in writing this treatise, for in the eighteenth-century there were some concerns over the virility of the 'scholar', who, according to historian Anne Vila, 'was often construed as *unsexed*, a being who was either unwilling or unable to perform [their] duty'.¹⁷² Assuming that Péron had proven the Frenchmen's ostensibly superior virility to that of the Tasmanians, Baudin's men even supposed that the possibly unsatisfied local women had recognised this. Sub-lieutenant Jacques de St Cricq alleged that the women's gestures 'alone would have been enough to enlighten [the men] as to their intentions ... to give themselves to us', but any possible ambiguity was clarified by some of the women's 'movements' which 'assured [the Frenchmen] that they were willing to make [them] *happy*'. However, in 'an affront to the coquettes of Van Diemen's Land', St Cricq attests that 'no one came forward to contend with them'.¹⁷³

The veracity of this claim is somewhat doubtful because Baudin stated that some of the 'oarsmen from the *Naturaliste*', who assumed they had been offered sexual favours by the women, found that once they got them alone, the women would not satisfy 'their desire'.¹⁷⁴ To their great disappointment, Cook's men had a similar experience during their stay in Tasmania. The astronomer William Bayly sulked that 'Tho all parts of the body is exposed, the Women refused to cohabit with our people on any Account'.¹⁷⁵ The explorers were quite

¹⁷⁰ John Millar, *An Historical View*, 4: 215 paraphrased by Maloney. 'Savages in the Scottish', 250.

¹⁷¹ Péron, *Voyage de découverte*, 85.

¹⁷² Anne C. Vila, 'Sex, Procreation, and the Scholarly Life from Tissot to Balzac', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2002, 239-240.

¹⁷³ Jacques de St Cricq, 'Papers of Jacques de St Cricq', Archives Nationales, Marine Series 5JJ.48, N.J.B. Plomley (trans), Extract repr. in Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, 142.

¹⁷⁴ Baudin, *Journal*, 305.

¹⁷⁵ William Bayly, 29 January, cited in Cook, *Journals*, 3(1): 55n.

shocked by the women's chaste behaviour, because after the voluptuary of Tahiti they expected to be treated to hospitality sex at all ports. Barbara Watson Andaya states that when Europeans first began to visit southeast Asia in the sixteenth century they were 'struck by the hospitality they received' as they were often provided with a 'local woman as a companion, and if desired, a sexual partner'.¹⁷⁶ In the eighteenth century, stories about various African and Asian peoples' hospitality sex were commonplace.¹⁷⁷ Such stories obviously led some European men to expect that they would be offered women whenever they entered indigenous societies, so were chagrined by the absence of such hospitality.¹⁷⁸

Perhaps hearing Bayly's complaint Cook decided to address this issue. He had heard that some of the 'Gentlemen belonging to the *Discovery*' had 'paid their addresses' to the women but were 'rejected with great disdain'. He believed that the 'blameable' women only refrained 'for fear of displeasing the Men', since 'an elderly man as soon as he observed it, ordered all the Women &

¹⁷⁶ While it is not necessary to explain why the sailors embraced this 'piece of Policy'. Andaya contends that within Southeast Asian cultures its rationale was to 'supply the newcomer with a network of kin' in order to 'help them deal with an unfamiliar environment'. It is evident from European accounts, however, that the stranger was also expected to provide gifts, so foreign lovers became a sign of prestige. Barbara Watson Andaya, 'From temporary wife to prostitute: sexuality and economic change in early modern Southeast Asia', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 12.

¹⁷⁷ The Comte de Buffon recorded many accounts in his *Natural History*, though all posited different motivations on the part of the hosts. For example, the Cape de Verd Negroes were supposed to 'deliver their wives and daughter to the embraces of strangers, if they chuse to pay for this singular favour', whereas the Jaloffs did the same, not for money, but instead for 'honour', and were apparently 'injured by a refusal'. Finally, the 'Samoiedes, the Zembians, the Borandians, the Laplanders, the Greenlanders, and the savages to the north of the Esquimaus' all allegedly offered 'their wives and daughter' because they had 'a sense of their own deformity', so were 'vain when the offer is accepted' because it allowed them to think that their women were 'more handsome, because they [were] not despised by strangers'. Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, *Natural history, general and particular, by the Count de Buffon. Translated into English. Illustrated with three hundred and one copper-plates, and occasional notes and observations by the translator*, trans. William Smellie, 8 Vols, Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, London, 1781, Vol. 3, 63-64 and 140-1.

¹⁷⁸ In North America, Richard Godbeer found that William Byrd, who was part of an expedition sent to investigate the border between Virginia and North Carolina in 1728, was outraged that his native American hosts 'offered [them] no bedfellows according to good Indian fashion, which [they] had reason to take unkindly'. So that night his associates went out 'hunting after' the 'sad-coloured ladies' in order to provide them with the 'hospitality' they had been waiting for. William Byrd, 'The Secret History of the Line', in Wendy Martin (ed.) *Colonial American Travel Narratives*, Penguin, New York, 1994, 113-4, cited in Richard Godbeer, 'Eroticizing the Middle Ground: Anglo-Indian Sexual Relations along the Eighteenth-Century Frontier', in Martha Hodes (ed.) *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, New York University Press, New York and London, 1999, 97.

Children away', and the women only left after first 'shewing a little reluctancy'. Cook was irritated by the women's 'conduct' which he believed could have 'fatal consequences' because it 'create[d] a jealousy in the men ... without answering any one purpose whatever, not even that of the [English] lover obtaining the object of his wishes'. Taking his men's wellbeing into account, in a rather mercantile way I might add, Cook criticised the Tasmanian women's behaviour by asking 'why the men should risk their own safety where nothing is to be obtained?'¹⁷⁹ The explorers' expectation that they would be furnished with wanton female companions for the duration of their brief stays suggests that they were not concerned with enlightenment warnings against promiscuity, and, supposedly like the savage men, were keen to indulge in non-procreative sex. Consequently, it is not surprising that they construed that sex was primarily a leisure pursuit for the Aboriginal men, because, to them, that is all it was when they sailed into exotic ports.

vi. conclusion

The explorers recorded many examples of the Aboriginal men's labour and leisure activities including how they procured food, made their manufactures, played, spent time with children, and indulged their sexual desires. Their depictions of the men's bodies employed in these diverse actions illustrate that the men were very energetic in their daily lives. The accounts display the Aboriginal men's agility, dexterity, perseverance, and strategy in hunting and fishing, their ingenuity and pragmatism in building their dwellings and making their wares, their exuberance and pride in playing and dancing, their gentle affection in fathering their children, and their vigorous, violent, and romantic pursuit of women. Yet, the explorers' prevailing opinion concerning this range of activities and qualities was that the men were simply indolent, ignorant, and brutal.

Instead of recognising the complexity and diversity of the men's work and recreation that they witnessed and described, the explorers frequently

¹⁷⁹ Cook, *Journals*, 3(1): 56. We should remember that one of the women's 'blameable' actions was to leave 'all parts of the body exposed'.

parroted European prejudices regarding the nature of savage society. Enlightenment ideas concerning indigenous labour and arts and industry incorporated ancient tropes on humours, climate, and skin colour, with ostensibly empiricist studies on physiology and demography, and humanist aims of progress and improvement. Yet, the consequence of these theories was that indigenous people were constructed *a priori* as unduly indolent and ignorant as well as lascivious and violent, or else passionless and infertile. Consequently, in an age of slavery and imperialism, savage peoples were perceived as undeserving of their bounteous land and freedom for they could not make productive use of them, which was crystallised by the philosophers and explorers frequent allusions to the savages' purported animality.

Such ideas must have been at the forefront of the explorers' minds when they recorded their impressions of the Aboriginal men's labour and recreation for it dominated their explicit evaluations. However, at times they presented alternative views, and even sophisticated and nuanced critiques of their European civilisation and ways of thinking. So the explorers' journals are far richer sources on eighteenth-century European ideas and mores than much of the historiography reveals, and present a more complex, multifaceted picture of Aboriginal life than recent histories suggest.

NEW CONTACTS, NEW BODIES

After making their discoveries about the Aboriginal and Tasmanian men each of the expeditions departed local waters, though not all of the voyagers safely returned home. Marion-Dufresne met his end at the hands of Maori warriors in New Zealand, and Cook was killed by the Hawaiians. Phillip was ailing by the time his commission ended and he returned home, though Collins stayed on and became an eventual lieutenant-governor. D'Entrecasteaux contracted scurvy and died after departing New Britain, and Baudin died at Mauritius, his lungs destroyed by tuberculosis. Flinders also suffered on that island, imprisoned by the French for many years. In fact, in many respects, the drama of the explorers' tragic ends overshadowed their achievements, and is now better known than their Aboriginal ethnographies. History also attests that tragedy dogged Aboriginal lives, as the number and extent of British colonies expanded, and competition between natives and newcomers over land and resources increased.

Throughout the nineteenth century settlers increasingly came to consider Aboriginal people as a 'nuisance and a menace to life and property'. Bernard Smith contends that this outlook manifested in their depictions of Aboriginal people, and their 'harden[ed], unsympathetic attitude is revealed in the grotesque comic figures of natives'.¹ One of his examples of this was a lithograph attributed to T.R. Browne, *King Teapot and his Two Gins* (1833), which depicts a man, ostensibly the 'Chief of the Bogan Tribe', and his two

¹ Bernard Smith, *European Visions and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, and New York, 1960, 202.

wives carrying two small children.² The king is depicted in profile, his body exaggeratedly grotesque with an enormous stomach and round buttocks protruding over his thin legs. His left arm, which extends back, bent at the elbow, is drawn to mimic the handle of the eponymous teapot, and his spear, the spout. His wives are little more than stick figures, their emaciated frames struggling under the weight of the children and burdens they carry. It is easy to read colonial imperatives in the production of this image of the comical body, because of the nature of contemporary settler-indigenous relations. Unexpectedly, however, such derogatory depictions of the Aboriginal male body are also evident in texts which cannot be construed as colonial, such as the journals of non-British maritime explorers in the nineteenth century.

A number of voyages of discovery landed in Australia during this period, and their studies of Aboriginal people would compete with the accounts of colonial administrations, overland explorers, missionaries, whalers, sealers, and settlers. While there were some striking similarities in the maritime explorers' descriptions of Aboriginal people to those in the eighteenth-century journals,³ there were also some notable differences to their earlier counterparts. Such departures reflect the hardening of race theories, which became less subject to debate, and were received with more consensus. As the nineteenth-century progressed attitudes towards human difference sharpened as the inferiority of some races were increasingly considered to be insurmountable to civilising endeavours.⁴ To an even greater degree, these representations of Aboriginal men also reveal the men's new position as colonial subjects.

² *King Teapot and his two gins, Chief of the Bogan Tribe, New South Wales, as he appeared after having a tightener*, lithograph, drawn by T.B. (1833), repr. in Smith, *European Vision*, plate 138.

³ For example, Jacques Arago, draftsman on Louis de Freycinet's 1817-1820 voyage around the world, appeared to follow the template established by some of the eighteenth-century voyagers. His description of the men of Endracht's land is very reminiscent of the eighteenth-century accounts in that it atomises the body and fetishises particular parts. He states 'they are of a middling stature; their skin is as black as ebony, their eyes are small and lively, they have a broad forehead, flat nose, large mouth, thick lips, and white teeth; they breast is tolerably broad, and covered with little incisions: their extremities are slender; their motions quick and numerous; their gestures rapid; their weapons not very dangerous; their agility is surprising; their language noisy'. Jacques Arago, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World in the Uranie and Physicienne Corvettes, commanded by Captain Freycinet, during the Years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, Treuttel and Wurtz, Treuttel, Jun. and Richter, London, 1823, Pt 1, 182.

⁴ See Samuel Marsden's discussion of the Aboriginal man Daniel, discussed in footnote 15.

In the nineteenth-century, foreign expeditions found signs of British colonialism in the most unlikely places. For example, Barlatier Demas, lieutenant on Jules Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville's *Astrolabe* during his 1837-1840 voyage to the south seas, had been about to fire upon a kangaroo while hunting inland from Port Essington on the north coast, when two Aboriginal men suddenly ran out of the scrub crying 'Wattaloo! Welleton! [Waterloo, Wellington]'. The shocked Frenchmen 'never expected that two miserable savages would hurl these two words at [them] in the middle of the Australian desert'.⁵ Dumont d'Urville had a similar experience on his first voyage to Australia in 1826. While anchored in the seemingly lonely King George Sound, the *Astrolabe* was suddenly visited by a boat 'manned by Englishmen' who had been 'sealing along these coasts'.⁶ Moreover, the sealers were accompanied by Aboriginal women who had been abducted because they were so 'useful to them in getting sustenance'.⁷ Such examples of colonial contact in seemingly remote locations confirmed the French assumption that the British established outposts all over 'these inhospitably shores' in order to demonstrate that they 'consider[ed] themselves the owners of the whole of New Holland'.⁸

Yet, in their representations of the Aboriginal body, the foreign explorers seemed to confirm the new British claims of ownership of both the land and the indigenous people. Smith's thesis on the 'grotesque comic figure' was not the only example of the influence of settler-colonialism in depictions of the Aboriginal male body, for it was also palpable in the French and Russian representations. In addition to the eighteenth-century explorers' representations of the *Martial Body* and *Indolent Body* discussed in this thesis, it is evident that the nineteenth-century explorers depicted a host of new archetypal indigenous

⁵ Barlatier Demas, 'Raffles Bay', in Jules S-C Dumont d'Urville. *An Account in Two Volumes of Two Voyages to the South Seas, by Captain Jules S-C Dumont d'Urville, of the French Navy to Australia, New Zealand, Oceania 1826-1829 in the corvette Astrolabe and to the Straits of Magellan, Chile, Oceania, South East Asia, Australia, Antarctica, New Zealand and Torres Strait 1837-1840 in the Corvettes Astrolabe and Zélée*, 2 Vols. Helen Rosenman (trans. and ed.), Melbourne University Press, Carleton, 1987, Vol. 2, 412.

⁶ Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 1, 31.

⁷ J.R. Quoy and P.J. Gaimard, 'The Natives of King George Sound', in Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 1, p. 45.

⁸ Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 2, 390.

bodies, including the *Performing Body* and the *Degraded Body*. Yet, these constructions were more uniformly derided, and discussed with greater certainty than those of the eighteenth century.

Upon arriving in Sydney Jacques Arago, draftsman on Louis de Freycinet's expedition of 1817-1820, could not 'comprehend how the government of Sydney, so sage in its regulations, so just in its policy, can permit savages from the interior to reside in the capital'. The reason for his shock was that they did not conceal 'from women and young girls the disgusting spectacle of [their] hideous nakedness'. He was even more dismayed to hear the 'soft voices' of the British girls urging the Aboriginal men and women to perform 'their savage sports', and exhibit 'all the appearance of the most disgusting wretchedness'. It seemed that such performances were a colonial form of entertainment, for he witnessed Aboriginal people enact one of their 'bacchanals', in the 'court' of the 'house of one of the richest and most respected merchants' in the colony. In these private arenas the Aboriginal men would 'brandish their clubs' and then strike 'each other with repeated blows'. This was not only an entertainment for the rich, however, for Arago saw 'a similar spectacle in the yard of little public-house, where also one savage fell victim to the cruelty of another'.⁹

The 'spectacle' described here is markedly different from those eighteenth-century displays described by Collins and Hunter in chapters three and five. Although they did not fully grasp their import, and sneered at parts, the First Fleet officers were honoured and excited to be invited to witness the Aboriginal trials, contests, and dances. These were held on Aboriginal ground, in spaces specially prepared such as the *yoo-lahng* in order to uphold indigenous customs and laws, whereas Arago suggested that nineteenth-century performances were arranged by the British hosts, as little more than entertainment for their guests. Further, the Frenchman saw it as a debased and violent fracas, and did not attempt to read into it any special significance for the indigenous polity, which Collins and Hunter at least tried to do in part, even if such meanings remained opaque. Arago's account suggests that within the more

⁹ Arago, *Narrative*, Pt 2, 168-9.

entrenched and confident settler-colonial context of the nineteenth century, Aboriginal people were frequently depicted as little more than performing bodies, their cultures stripped of indigenous significance and displayed exclusively as entertainment.

A more common depiction in the nineteenth century was of the Aboriginal men as degraded bodies, their figures emaciated from want of food, and bereft of dignity. Arago asserted that the 'wandering and precarious life they are forced to lead, and the frequent recurrence of a total want of food' could be read in their corporeality. They had a 'lean body, [which] far from robust, supports a head void of expression, or rather characterised by brutal ferociousness'.¹⁰ Dumont d'Urville, while staying at Raffles Bay in Arnhem Land, described the local Aborigines begging for food around a Malaysian camp which was visiting in order to collect *trepang*, or *bêche de mer*. He claimed that they 'prowled round the boilers in which the fish were cooking, getting the scraps thrown away by the fishermen'. The French navigator seemed to luxuriate in describing the Aborigines' degradation, for he reported that on one occasion,

the [Malay] fishermen amused themselves by throwing a few handfuls of rice on the ground for the savages. Immediately the whole troop rushed at it, fighting for it, and [Dumont d'Urville] saw these miserable people swallow handfuls of sand in which were mixed a few grains of rice to assuage their hunger.¹¹

The hungry natives also begged the Europeans for food, even at King George Sound where the eighteenth-century explorers had faced such difficulties in encountering the seemingly indifferent and hostile Aborigines. The first Aboriginal man that Dumont d'Urville met here accepted a piece of bread, 'ate it hungrily', and then happily capered for the strangers.¹² Such depictions of starvation and debasement stand in stark contrast to the eighteenth-century accounts described in chapter three, in which the almost haughty Aboriginal people often refused to taste the Europeans' food, especially

¹⁰ Arago, *Narrative*, Pt 1, 169.

¹¹ Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 2, 395 and 393.

¹² Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 1, 28.

bread. Moreover, in the nineteenth century the Aboriginal people had also overcome their even stronger dislike of alcohol.

The Russian explorer Thaddeus Bellingshausen arrived in Sydney in March 1820, and, his first visitor was Bungaree, who arrived ‘in a dirty European boat’. Bellingshausen noted the man’s tattered European clothes and the copper plate he wore around his neck which said ‘Boongaree, Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe, 1815’. He also commented on the wife’s curious outfit comprising an English dress and kangaroo-teeth hair ornaments, and his naked children.¹³ Bellingshausen seemed particularly struck by Bungaree’s apparent pretensions. He reported that upon his arrival Bungaree ‘point[ed] to his companions, said, “These are my people”, and then point[ed] to the whole of the north shore, [and proclaimed] “This is my Land”’. That Bellingshausen juxtaposed Bungaree’s grand pronouncement with the fact that he ‘begged for tobacco, old clothes and ropes, and whatever {he} happened to notice’, suggests that Bellingshausen found his claims of native ownership within the colony implausible. Bungaree’s family also accepted ‘a glass of grog each’ and then ‘left the ship half drunk, shouting horribly’. The depiction of intoxicated Aboriginal men and women would become a commonplace feature of nineteenth-century representations of indigenous people.

The Russian also pointed out that Bungaree’s wife, ‘Matora, who called herself “Queen”, behaved with even greater vulgarity than the other guests’. Perhaps the reason for Bellingshausen’s reproach to her in particular was because he had noticed that Bungaree’s ‘daughter was almost half white, [and] handsome in face and figure, which gave evidence of European blood’, whereas his sons were black.¹⁴ It seems Bungaree’s being made a cuckold was another sign of his degradation in Bellingshausen’s eyes. Unlike Arago, who thought the British ‘culpable’ for not ‘subjecting the savages to milder manners’, the Russian seemed to blame the natives, comparing them to ‘the wandering

¹³ Thaddeus Bellingshausen, *The Voyage of Captain Bellingshausen to the Antarctic Seas, 1819-1820, translated from the Russian*, Frank Debenham (ed.), Hakluyt Society, London, 1945, 162.

¹⁴ Bellingshausen, *Voyage*, 163.

Tzigani (Gipsies) of Russia who 'have no wish to change their restless lives for a settled and quiet existence'.¹⁵

The structures of settler-colonialism were quickly established in the nineteenth century, even in the remote corners of the continent, drawing many Aboriginal people into the ambit of the British empire. The colonial desire to transform them into British subjects was initially intermittent and lacklustre, resulting in many Aboriginal people living on the fringes of the settlements, in a liminal state encompassing the material and customs of both indigenous and British cultures. Although their failure to assimilate would increasingly be construed in the context of the developing race discourses, and seen as a manifestation of their inherent savagery and irredeemable characters.¹⁶ This attempted transformation would become more complete at the close of the century with the advent of the Protection Acts. Unlike the eighteenth-century contact narratives, it is difficult not to consider this later history when examining the nineteenth-century accounts of contact. The colonial armature of the nineteenth-century influenced not only how settlers perceived Aboriginal bodies, but even how foreign explorers viewed them.

This very brief survey of four nineteenth-century expeditions highlights some significant differences to their eighteenth-century counterparts. While some of the latter certainly included derisive depictions of the Aboriginal body, they were not as uniformly derogatory as the nineteenth-century accounts. Arago, Dumont d'Urville and Bellingshausen lacked any engagement with broad philosophies on the nature of man, such as Rousseau's thesis on the state of nature or even Locke's notions on the poverty and brutality of savage

¹⁵ Arago, *Narrative*, Pt. 2, 173, and Bellingshausen, *Voyage*, 184.

¹⁶ Dumont d'Urville stated that as 'for the possibility of bringing the natives of New South Wales to a state of civilisation or even to a condition less savage and less nomadic than that to which nature seems specifically to have destined them, that is a hope which the English appear to have completely abandoned'. To illustrate why Dumont d'Urville quotes an account by missionary Samuel Marsden about a native boy called Daniel. Apparently Daniel was 'kept' by the botanist Mr Caley and even taken to England where he 'was introduced into the best society of London'. Yet after his return the first time Marsden saw him Daniel was 'seated stark naked on a tree stump in the bush'. Upon being asked why he was in this state, he replied that 'the bush was what he liked best'. Marsden then posits that 'shortly afterwards' Daniel came across a young English woman and 'had the audacity to attack and rape her'. Thus Marsden pronounced that the young man 'died as a savage despite all the advantages he had enjoyed in a civilised society'. Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 1, 90-1.

societies. Instead, they seemed to take for granted newly entrenched notions of inveterate racial inferiority. This meant that they did not seek to investigate how studies of Aboriginal people might shed light on philosophical theories, and instead seemed to possess an utter certainty that there was no more to Aboriginal people than what they first witnessed, and what they could succinctly record.¹⁷ While the Enlightenment philosophies at times unduly influenced the eighteenth-century explorers' perceptions of Aboriginal men, they did at least contribute to the explorers' contact with the Aborigines being more exploratory, and a more genuine form of intellectual enquiry.

The most striking differences between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts were the Aboriginal people's responses to the explorers. The eighteenth-century contacts had been with Aboriginal people who seemed to have no or little knowledge of the Europeans. Further, many of these explorers took more time to interview Aboriginal people than their later counterparts, in order to test the contemporary philosophies. This allowed the Aboriginal people time to investigate them in return. Hence, the eighteenth-century encounters were shaped by mutual curiosity, and neither party completely controlled the situations. Whereas in the nineteenth century, even in the most remote locations, Aboriginal people already had prior experience with Europeans, so there was little wariness, surprise or inquisitiveness on their part. The impact of settler-colonialism was apparent, as the Aboriginal people encountered seemed to have some notion of what was expected of them, and, in turn, what they could expect from the strangers. They also seemed to more readily permit the strangers to dictate the nature of the meeting.

This comparison between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century accounts demonstrates that each encounter between native and stranger must be examined in its own particular context. The encounters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were shaped by their own unique intellectual and political milieus, and consequently each period of contact needs its own interpretive tools

¹⁷ For example, after meeting his first man at King George Sound, Dumont d'Urville had no interest in meeting another who wanted to visit his ship, and Arago only wanted to see a native in order to 'enrich [his] Atlas with some of these grotesque and curious scenes' of savage life. Dumont d'Urville, *Account*, Vol. 1, 29, and Arago, *Narrative*, Pt. 1, 170.

in order to comprehend its complexities. Thus the aim of this thesis has been to shed light on a brief period of Aboriginal and European bodies in contact and attempt to interpret it within its most evocative contexts.

This close examination of eighteenth-century encounters, be they dramatic or mundane, hostile or amicable, brief or lingering, lucid or strange, reveals that both cultures were complex, and often incomprehensible to both the other, and to the modern reader. Making sense of the complexities and nuances of first contacts allows greater insights into the history that followed (and not the reverse, which has been the pitfall of many a historian). The eighteenth century was when ideas about indigenous inferiority were elaborated and disseminated but this constellation of attributes, and the implications of inferiority hardened over the next two centuries. Yet, we must remember that the explorers possessed the Enlightenment determination to 'dare to know'. So it was also a time when competing notions of Aboriginal men's superiority, in terms of egalitarianism, paternal love and physical dexterity, and commensurability, regarding pragmatic understanding, sensory acuity, and martial protocols, were also espoused (by at least some of the explorers). Thus, looking back to the eighteenth century is also significant because we can speculate on the possible course history may have taken had these lesser known ideas achieved prominence instead.

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